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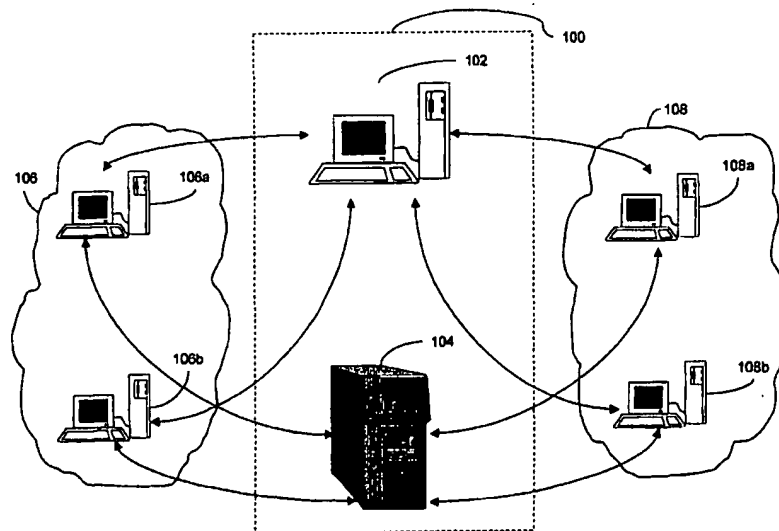
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(57) Abstract: A method and system (1a) for providing an employment placement service that provides incentive to encourage use of the employment placement service by both employers and job applicants. In a representative environment (100), job openings are broadcasted, detailed information about the employers advertising the openings is presented, methods for employers and applicants to exchange information, e.g., résumé, are provided, and incentives for both employers and job applicants to use the employment placement service are provided. The primary components include a job listing database (104), an employer information database (104), a résumé database (104), and a series of graphical user interfaces (104) that integrate the databases (104) and give the employers and applicants access to view and manipulate the information. The system (100) can also save user queries for various purposes.

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METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT

This application claims the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/170,352, filed December 13, 1999, which is hereby incorporated by
5 reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

Field of the Invention

The present invention broadly relates to the field of electronic commerce and to global network job placement services. More particularly, the present invention relates to
10 a system and method for gathering and disseminating information about employers, employment openings, and prospective employees, and a system and method for providing incentives to the prospective employees and employers encouraging the use of the employment service.

Background of the Invention

15 Fueled by a robust economy and a decreasing pool of qualified applicants, employers today expend considerable resources on attracting, screening, and hiring employees to fill manpower needs. Faced with staffing shortages, employers must evaluate their needs, advertise such needs to reach as many qualified recruits as possible, and screen potential employees through burdensome hiring interviews, all typically on
20 very short notice. Further compounding this tedious process, employers searching for employees with highly specialized skills suffer from a limited number of qualified personnel, especially when restricted to a specific geographic region.

Since the advent of print media, the traditional method of job placement has been through classified advertisements. Although these newspaper advertisements may be
25 sufficient for one-time searches for recruits in a particular location, advertisements in a single newspaper or series of newspapers fail to meet the needs of today's global economy, in which large regional, national, and even international employers are continually looking for employees. What is more, placing classified advertisements in newspapers is an expensive undertaking, often constituting an employer's single largest

recruiting expense. Not surprisingly, most newspapers derive more than half of their revenue from classified advertisements.

In light of the great expense and limited effect of print advertisements, employers have embraced the global computer network, or "Internet," for its powerful ability to
5 gather and disseminate information. In the context of employment placement, early uses of the technology involved simply posting job openings on employer's individual websites. Although this technique avoids the cost of classified advertisements, it requires job seekers to visit individual websites without really knowing if a position is available. In addition to being time-consuming for the recruit, this employment placement method
10 is unreliable for the employer, because the employer has no way of assuring its advertisement is reaching enough qualified personnel.

Seeing the need for centralized job listings, the next step in the evolution of Internet employment placement was to establish large websites that post open positions for multiple companies. These Internet job sites feature extensive lists of job openings
15 organized by such criteria as company, location, and field of employment. Examples of such Internet job sites known in the prior art are HotJobs.comTM, Hire .comTM, Jobs.comTM, JobOptionsTM, Monster.comTM, CareerBuilder NetworkTM, CareerPath.comTM, America's Job BankTM, and IdealJobs.comTM. Although some sites are free to employers, most typically charge for each listing or, perhaps, charge a monthly
20 or annual fee. Through advertisement, each Internet job site strives to attract as many visits by potential applicants as possible. These advertisements, combined with the steadily increasing Internet usage by job applicants, enable employers to broadcast openings to many qualified applicants with relatively little effort and resources.

In addition to posting openings, some Internet job sites offer additional services
25 that aid an employer's search and hiring process. Some sites give employers special access through which to directly create and edit job listings. Some sites provide means for applicants to forward résumés to the employers and, in turn, provide employers with tracking tools that organize incoming résumés into categories. Typically, the sites provide screening and searching tools that help employers target the most qualified
30 recruits. Some sites offer anonymous résumé postings to accommodate a job seeker who does not want her current employer to know about her job search. Finally, some sites

provide files in which to keep notes on individual recruits, such as whether a recruit has been contacted, interviewed, or rejected.

Related to Internet job sites, Internet recruiting services further expand an employer's reach by providing means to post open positions to several Internet job sites, while only having to enter the information once. Yahoo Recruiter™ is one example of such an Internet recruiting service. Once positions are posted, the recruiting service in turn collects the incoming résumés from the various job sites and organizes them into a single database for the employer. These Internet recruiting services therefore offer the advantage of a central place to manage the process of posting positions and filtering résumés.

Despite the many conveniences Internet job sites and recruiting sites provide, there are still significant drawbacks. First and foremost, employers have no guarantee that the fees they pay will result in the finding and hiring of a recruit. In fact, a considerable number of job listings languish on the job sites, costing the employers money and producing no results. Through advertisements and offers of ancillary job search services (such as résumé writing software), the Internet job sites attempt to attract as many applicants as possible. However, no single Internet job sites offer a unique incentive that would persuade an applicant to use its service instead of another.

Second, typical job listings provide candidates with only a limited amount of information about the position and an even more limited amount of information about the employer. Some job sites do offer hyperlinks to the employer's website. However, these hyperlinks require the candidate to exhaustingly browse the employer's website looking for recruiting information that is organized differently on each website. Such an inconvenience results in the candidate's losing patience and abandoning the search, thereby leaving the employer with no return on its investment.

Also, current Internet job sites typically use the same basic approach for all types of job openings. It is not surprising, therefore, that these "one size fits all" sites are not tailored to fit the specific needs of many professions.

Consider, for example, healthcare professionals such as hospital nurses. Unlike most other professions, hospital nurses have a skill set that is easily transportable. Since hospitals, unlike most service businesses, do not have a steady core of repeat business, it

is easy for a nurse to take his or her skill set from one hospital to another or from one region to another. Thus, nursing is especially well-suited to temporary staffing. In contrast, other professions, such as engineering, require a significant investment in time to acclimate a new employee to the nuances of a new job. For this reason, one size fits all job websites are not optimal.

Thus, a third drawback is the inability of current Internet job sites to satisfy the needs of highly specialized fields, such as healthcare. Typically, healthcare job seekers desire a quick, easy to use service that presents information about healthcare facilities (e.g., hospitals and medical clinics) and their position openings in a clear and uniform manner. The information must be concise, addressing the concerns most job seekers express when searching for a job. For example, in the healthcare context, pertinent information would include such facts as the number of beds in a particular unit, the number of operating rooms, whether the facility has a trauma center, and whether the facility is a teaching hospital. In effect, the job seeker desires an employment service that offers not only job listing abilities, but integrates the postings with a data warehouse filled with information on employer facilities. This integration would enable the job seeker to focus on specific employer facility criteria and formulate quick, targeted searches.

From the employer's perspective, an employment service that accommodates highly specialized fields saves money. Because the job applicants are more focused and can better understand the needs of the employer's facility in reference to their own, such a specialized employment service integrated with a data warehouse appreciably reduces the time and effort employers waste on unqualified and incompatible applicants.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a method and system for providing an employment placement service. Broadly stated, the present invention broadcasts job openings, presents detailed information about the employers advertising the openings, provides means for employers and applicants to exchange information (e.g., résumés), and provides incentives for both employers and job applicants to use the employment placement service. The primary components of the present invention are a job listing

database, an employer information database, a résumé database, and a series of graphical user interfaces that integrate the databases and give the employers and applicants access to view and manipulate the information.

5 In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, incentives encourage use of the employment placement service by both employers and job applicants. For employers, the incentive is a billing structure that only charges for results. Specifically, the present invention provides unlimited job listings and charges employers only for successful job listings that result in hirings. Optionally, such charges attach only to job listings for high demand, or "critical hire," positions, while the fulfillment of other, non-critical positions
10 occurs free of charge. Thus, the employer places advertisements for free and pays an employment placement fee only if their recruiting efforts are successful. As another incentive to use the service, the present invention furnishes the employer with means for advertising its business and facilities to potential employees, by giving job applicants access to the employer information database.

15 As an incentive for the job applicant, a representative embodiment of the present invention provides a signing bonus if 1) the job applicant uses the service to locate and contact an employer, and 2) if the employer hires the job applicant for a critical hire position. This signing bonus is paid from the fees the employer pays for a successful job listing. In addition to critical hire positions, the present invention also encourages
20 applicants for non-critical positions to use the service by offering weekly prize drawings for all applicants who have started employment during a particular week in a position located on the employment service. The employment service pays for the prizes using, for example, a portion of the monthly subscription fees (if applicable) or revenues from filled critical hire positions. Prizes could include anything from watches and other
25 personal gifts to vacations. The magnitude of the prize necessarily depends on the number of employers subscribing to the employment service.

Thus, the present invention ensures a successful employment placement by offering incentives on both sides of the transaction. Employers pay only if job listings are successful, while applicants are paid to make those job listings successful. The net
30 result, provided by the present invention, is the increased use of the employment service

and, consequently, increased advertising fees and profits for the provider of the employment placement service.

Another important aspect of the present invention is the integration of the job listing database and the employer information database. Unlike the prior art, which provides limited employer information and tedious hyperlinks, the present invention marries the job listing resource with a vast body of information about each employer. For each job listing, an applicant can click through the employer name and receive uniform employer criteria, as well as narratives that further explain the business of an employer (*e.g.*, company history, culture, facilities, and benefits). The employer information database includes this information for all employers of a particular field, *e.g.*, all hospitals, and not just for the employers that post job listings through the employment service. Thus, an applicant has a central website through which to search position openings, conduct research on the associated employers, and contact those employers to proceed with the hiring process. By eliminating the need to browse hyperlinks, the present invention increases the chance that an applicant will finish a search and eventually contact an employer.

Related to this integration of database information, another important aspect of the present invention is the ability of the graphical user interfaces to access and manipulate information from the databases, and to present that information in a clear, concise form. This aspect strongly appeals to applicants and employers in specialized or technical fields, such as the information technology or healthcare fields. In these fields, because the employers have specific needs that only a few specialized applicants can fill, presenting only the information necessary for finding a match is critical. The present invention summarizes the employer information an applicant would find most important in choosing a position and attaches that information to each of the employer's job listings. Thus, the job applicant need only read the listing and click on the employer to obtain all of the information necessary for making a decision.

For example, in the healthcare industry, consider an operating room nurse looking for employment in a hospital with a trauma center in a particular city. After locating and reviewing a job listing in that city for an operating room nurse that relates basic information about the position, the nurse applicant can then click on the hospital that

posted the advertisement. Immediately, the present invention displays the hospital information most important to an applicant's job search, including whether the hospital has a trauma center. Additionally, when the nurse applicant reviews other postings and the associated employer information, the same critical information is presented in a
5 uniform manner such that the applicant easily locates and absorbs the information and effortlessly compares job listings and employers to each other.

In a preferred embodiment, the present invention provides means to search the databases, by both employers and applicants. The information in each database is stored in categorized, searchable fields. Thus, to conduct a search, the present invention
10 prompts the employer or applicant with a graphical user interface asking for criteria in each field. Employers can search the job listing database, the employer information database, and the résumé database. The applicants can search the job listing database and the employer information database.

According to a preferred embodiment, the present invention also provides a
15 unique résumé service by integrating the graphical user interfaces and the résumé database. The résumé database maintains specific information on current and past applicants. Upon registration with the service, a graphical user interface prompts an applicant for basic contact information (e.g., name, address, and telephone number), as well as criteria specific to the applicant's field of employment, such as education,
20 certifications, and technical experience. The intent of the résumé service is not to compose traditional, formal résumés, but rather to assign specific applicant qualifications and preferences that can be searched by employers or compared to employers' posted requirements to identify matches. Essentially, the résumé service constructs a profile of each applicant based on searchable criteria. In this manner, an employer can simply
25 identify a particular profile that meets the requirements of a position opening and look for applicants meeting that profile.

At any time, an applicant can access her résumé and update the information. To the extent the résumé is constructed along a template that includes standard fields, the applicant can update the résumé by telephone or facsimile, or other forms of messaging.
30 Indeed, one aspect of the present invention is the provision of standardized options for

entry in the required fields so that the résumé may be updated through pull down menus or touch tone selections or messaging.

In addition, the applicant can mark the résumé as active (during a job search) or inactive (once the applicant is hired). This feature allows an applicant to use the
5 employment service repeatedly without having to enter résumé information each time. Instead, after initially entering the information, finding a job, and marking the résumé as inactive, later when the applicant is searching for another job, she only has to update the résumé with the latest information and mark it active. Activating the résumé allows employers to view the information and enables the matching feature (described below)
10 between employer job listings and résumés.

Another aspect of the present invention provides electronic mail ("email") correspondence between the applicant and the employer, and between the employment service provider and both the employer and the applicant. Once an applicant has located a posting in which she is interested, a graphical user interface provides an email option
15 that enables the applicant to send a note to the employer. In response, the employer can reply to the applicant with email arranging further hiring steps (*e.g.*, a personal interview).

In addition to employer-applicant communication, the present invention also provides an email notification service between the employment service provider and the
20 employer or applicant. This service works in conjunction with the search functions of the present invention. Specifically, if a search by an employer returns no matching résumés or if a search by an applicant returns no matching job listings, the email notification service stores in memory the search criteria and the identity and email address of the searcher (employer or applicant). Later, if a job listing or résumé matching the search
25 criteria is entered into the employment service (or is activated), the employment service provider emails the employer or applicant to report that a match has been found.

Moreover, in accordance with an optional aspect of the present invention, data concerning queries to the system may be stored in memory and analyzed using statistical analysis and other data mining techniques to provide information as to the demand for
30 certain specialties or qualifications, or for certain employer criteria. Such information is useful to the applicant, the employers, and the system operator. The employers and the

system operator may, for example, use the information to determine an appropriate bonus amount to offer for a certain specialty (*i.e.*, the demand for a certain specialty). The employers can also use the information to determine employer criteria that applicants prefer (*e.g.*, what employment benefits applicants desire).

5 Finally, in this specification and in the claims, it should be recognized that the term "computers" as used herein is intended to have the broadest possible meaning to encompass a portion of a computer, a single computer, or one or more computers in communication with each other. Indeed, one of the principal advantages of the present invention is that it can be implemented on any variety of computer network systems.

10 Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide an employment placement service that provides employers and job applicants with incentives to use the service, and consequently, increases profits for the employment service provider.

 It is another object of the present invention to provide in one location all of the job opening and employer information necessary for an applicant to decide whether to
15 apply for a position.

 It is another object of the present invention to present job opening and employer information in a uniform, clear, and concise form, such that a potential employee can easily determine if she is interested in a position.

 It is another object of the present invention to collect and organize employer and
20 applicant information in preset criteria fields that can be searched to match applicant qualifications with employer needs.

 As described herein, the present invention comprises a system and method that includes at least the following significant features:

 1) a billing process that provides an unlimited number of free job listings and
25 charges employers only for job listings that result in the hiring of critical position applicants;

 2) an incentive program that pays applicants with prizes or bonuses for using the employment service;

 3) an employer database integrated with the job listing service so that
30 applicants have a central website through which to search position openings, conduct

research on the associated employers, and obtain all information necessary for deciding whether to apply for a position;

4) an interface, between the databases and the graphical user interface, that summarizes information that is critical to applicants of a specialized field and presents the information to the applicants in an easy to understand, uniform manner that facilitates comparisons of job openings and employers;

5) an interface, between the résumé database and the graphical user interface, that enables an applicant to create and edit a résumé tailored for specific searches in particular specialty fields;

6) an interface, between the users of the service and the employment service, that enables email communication for the purpose of establishing contact between employers and applicants;

7) a system for storing search queries and analyzing stored queries to assess, for example, relative demand for certain specialties; and

8) the ability to link the website and its databases to related specialty websites devoted strictly to information and data useful to members of specialized occupations.

These and other objects and advantages of the present invention are described in greater detail in the detailed description of the invention, the appended drawings, and the attached claims. Additional features and advantages of the invention will be set forth in the description that follows, will be apparent from the description, or may be learned by practicing the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram of the system architecture of the present invention, according to a representative embodiment.

Figure 1b is a schematic diagram of the hardware and networking configuration of the present invention, according to a representative embodiment.

Figure 2a is a schematic of the data access page hierarchy of the present invention, according to a representative embodiment.

Figure 2b is an image of the home page screen of a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 2c is a schematic diagram of a data access page hierarchy, according to an alternate representative embodiment of the present invention.

5 Figure 2d is an image of a home page screen, according to an alternate representative embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 3 is a flowchart outlining a method for access by a potential employee (applicant), according to a representative embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 3a is a legend explaining flowchart symbols.

10 Figures 4-10 are images of the various screens that the system provides to a potential employee during browsing of and interaction with the website, according to a representative embodiment of the present invention.

Figures 11a and 11b are a flowchart outlining a method for access by an employer, according to a representative embodiment of the present invention.

15 Figures 12a-12c illustrate a preferred embodiment of the web pages through which the job opening is edited.

Figures 13a-13e illustrate a preferred embodiment of the web pages through which the employer information is edited.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

20 The present invention is a system and method for providing an employment placement service that gathers and disseminates information about employers, employment openings, and prospective employees, rewards prospective employees for filling the employment openings, and charges employers only for advertising that results in hirings.

25 As an overview of the present invention, the following discussion describes the architecture and components of the system, the method of billing the employers and rewarding the job applicants, and the method of operating the website and the graphical user interfaces. The following description of a system architecture and a method for implementing an employment placement service within that architecture are examples of
30 preferred embodiments of the present invention. Although the present invention is

applicable to any employment placement service with access to employer and applicant databases, the following description and schematics trace the operation of the present invention in the context of the healthcare field. While the method described herein and illustrated in the figures contains many specific examples of information flow steps, these steps should not be construed as limitations on the scope of the invention, but rather as examples of information flow steps that could be used to practice the invention. As would be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art, many other variations on the system operation are possible, including differently grouped and ordered method steps. Accordingly, the scope of the invention should be determined not by the embodiments illustrated in these examples, but by the appended claims and their equivalents.

System Architecture

Referring to Figure 1a, the present invention comprises a server 104 that contains a job listing database, an employer information database, a résumé database, and a graphical user interface software application. The server 104 is in communication with a system operator console 102 and user computers 106 and 108 through the Internet.

Figure 1a illustrates schematically a system 100 according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. System 100 includes a system operator console 102 operatively connected to a server 104. Server 104 stores the job listing database, the employer information database, and the résumé database. Server 104 can be a database management system. Through operator console 102, a system operator can access server 104 to enter and modify data contained therein and otherwise control the database. Although the server is illustrated as resident on a single computer, this is not essential. The server could exist on widely distributed computers linked together. Also, the server can store past queries and include software for performing statistical analysis and other data mining on the stored data to provide information to users.

In the illustrated embodiment, system 100 is implemented as a website-accessible database on the Internet for gathering and disseminating information related to the employment service. Users 106, for example users 106a, 106b, 108a, and 108b, can access database 104 via the website. A user enters the appropriate website address (*e.g.*, URL) to obtain access to database 104. Using a series of web pages (described below),

users can enter, modify, and obtain information contained in the server databases. Users 106a, 106b, 108a, and 108b are both job seekers and employers.

According to a preferred embodiment, the hardware and networking configuration of the system is as shown in Figure 1b. Internet service provider 150, *e.g.*, PSINet, 5 houses server 104 for the employment service. In addition, Internet service provider hosts additional websites 152 related to the website of the employment service. These related websites provide information regarding specialty occupations, *e.g.*, operating room nurses, and can be accessed through the employment service web pages using hyperlinks. The server 104 for the employment service uses T3 lines 154 for Internet 10 access. Finally, the preferred hardware specifications 156 are shown in Figure 1b.

System Operation

The method of the present invention comprises two primary aspects: 1) the method of billing employers and providing incentives for applicants, and 2) the method of operating the website and exchanging information with the employers and applicants. 15 The second aspect, concerning the use of the website, implements a portion of the method of the first aspect. Specifically, the present invention provides the website to collect and distribute information about job listings, employers, and applicants, and to facilitate and track interactions between employers and applicants, such that an employment service can provide the billings and incentives of the first aspect.

20 Billings and Incentives:

According to the preferred embodiment of the present, an employer first registers with the employment service and provides the employment service provider with general background information about the employer's business and facilities. For healthcare facilities such as hospitals, this information could include basic contact information (*e.g.*, 25 address, telephone number, and email), a listing of department specialties, and the number and types of employees. Preferably, the employer also provides the employment service provider with a narrative description of the hospital and its facilities to give an applicant more of a sense of the culture and work atmosphere of the employer. (Even if an employer does not register with the employment service and post job listings, the 30 employment service obtains the information on its own and includes it in the employer

information database for the benefit of the applicants.) The employment service provider then analyzes the data, categorizes the data according to specific criteria (*i.e.*, criteria most helpful to a job seeker deciding whether to apply), and enters the data into the employer database in the searchable fields corresponding to the specific criteria.

5 The next step is for the employer to submit job listings for position openings. Optionally, the employment placement service can charge the employer a low monthly subscription fee, *e.g.*, \$39.95, for the privilege of entering job position listings on the website. The employment service provider applies this nominal administrative fee toward the preparation of paperwork, the maintenance of the website, and perhaps the
10 weekly prize drawings for encouraging job seekers to use the service (described in more detail below). Preferably, however, the employment placement service does not charge a subscription fee and allows the employer to submit an unlimited number of listings without being charged for each individual listing. The employment service provider enters each job listing in the job listing database, and at the same time, marks whether the
15 job listing is for a critical or non-critical position. A non-critical position is generally a position for which many applicants are qualified and which can be filled relatively easily, *e.g.*, janitors, cooks, and security personnel. A critical position is generally for a specialized position that is in high demand and for which only a small pool of applicants exist, *e.g.*, registered nurses, physician assistants, and medical technicians. The
20 employment service provider categorizes each position because the billing and incentive programs apply differently to each.

As an alternate embodiment of the present invention, an employer can use the job listing database to store descriptions for all of the job positions of the employer, regardless of whether the employer wishes to advertise a job position or not. In effect,
25 the employer uses the employment service provider to store its human resources data relating to job positions. Thus, if an opening does arise, the employer can simply retrieve a job position description that is already stored in the job listing database and create a job listing. This arrangement relieves the employer of the burden of maintaining the data storage and simplifies the creation of job listings.

30 Once openings are entered into the job listing database, a potential employee can access the website and browse the job advertisements. While browsing, the present

invention encourages the job seeker to register with the employment service by offering incentives. For applicants interested in non-critical positions, the incentive is a weekly prize drawing for all non-critical position applicants who start employment with an employer during a given period, preferably a week. The applicant must start a job for which the employer had a job listing on the employment service. The prize is purchased using, for example, a portion of the monthly subscription fees (if paid by the employers) or revenues from filled critical hire positions. The prize should be substantial enough to persuade a job applicant for a non-critical position to choose the employment service of the present invention over another service with no incentives.

For applicants for critical positions, the incentive to register and use the employment service to contact an employer is a signing bonus paid when the applicant accepts a position offered by an employer with a listing on the website. The bonus should be enough to encourage the applicant to register with the employment service, to use the service in place of other Internet job sites that offer no incentives, to mention the service to colleagues, and to return to the service when looking for another position. The size of the bonus depends upon the type of the position, for instance, whether the position is in high demand or is highly compensated. For such positions, employers are willing to pay larger advertising fees. Thus, because, according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the employment service provider pays the bonus out of the advertising fee received from the employer, the higher the advertising fee, the higher the signing bonus can be.

An employment service provider could set a fixed advertising fee, which includes a fixed fee for the employment service provider and a fixed fee for the signing bonus. This fixed advertising fee could apply to all critical hire positions and all employers.

Alternately, in another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the amount of the signing bonus is set by the employer and the fee paid to the employment service provider is an additional amount over the ordinary fee paid to the employment service provider. For example, with a higher signing bonus, the fee paid to the employment service provider could be some percentage of the bonus or could be an additional flat fee on top of the ordinary fee paid to the employment service provider. The employment service provider would set a minimum advertising fee (fee to the service provider plus the fee to

pay the signing bonus), but employers would be able to raise the advertising fee to pay any desired signing bonus.

With variable signing bonuses, employers can attract applicants with larger signing bonuses, to address acute staffing shortages associated with particular job
5 positions. Allowing employers to adjust bonuses creates a more fluid market, in which employers and applicants can easily gauge the demand for job positions and can respond accordingly. Employers can raise bonuses to attract a limited number of applicants, and applicants can avoid employers that are paying below market values.

Along these lines, the system can also be used to allow employers to bid for the
10 services of prospective employees, especially those that are in high demand. To implement this feature, the system notifies employers that an applicant satisfying certain criteria is available by, for example, posting that applicant's résumé, or through direct notification, such as by email. Interested employers can then submit bids for the applicant's time. Bids could involve a combination of compensation, bonuses, working
15 conditions, and the like. The applicant could then select the bid they find most attractive. In this example, the decision is left to the subjective determination of the applicant.

The variable bonus structure can provide administrative benefits for the employers as well. Specifically, because the employer pays an advertising fee, as opposed to compensating an applicant directly, the employer avoids accounting burdens
20 such as payroll withholdings and tax reporting requirements. Although the applicant must account for the received income (bonus), the employer can simply book the advertising fee as an expense. Thus, instead of hiring an applicant, then awarding a signing bonus, and dealing with payroll withholding and reporting requirements, an employer simply pays the advertising fee up front. In addition, the employment service
25 provider may also avoid accounting burdens, assuming the bonus paid is less than the minimum amounts at which withholding and reporting requirements apply, as dictated by applicable laws.

In an alternate embodiment of the present invention, to avoid exploitation of the bonus program by applicants who frequently change jobs, eligibility for the signing
30 bonus is limited over a specified period, e.g., a limit of two signing bonuses per year per individual.

Having registered for the service, the next step is for the applicant to contact an employer. The employer then screens the applicant and proceeds through the hiring process, *e.g.*, personal interviews, callbacks, and reference checks. This hiring process takes place external to the present invention.

5 According to the preferred embodiment, when an applicant accepts a position listed by the employment service, the applicant notifies the employment service provider. Typically, this notification is not a burden for the applicant because of the incentives noted above. However, as an alternative to the applicant's notifying the employment service provider, the employer may forward the notification. Or, if an employer deletes a
10 listing from the job listing database, the employment service provider may assume the position was filled and can contact the employer for verification. In any case, once the employment service provider receives some notification of a hiring, the employment service provider confirms the hiring with both sides of the transaction (employer and applicant).

15 In some cases, an employer will advertise job listings both in the employment service of the present invention and other media, such as kiosk postings and newspaper classifieds. Thus, in some instances, the hiring employer and the employment server provider may have difficulty determining whether an applicant was located and hired through the service. For example, an applicant may see a position noted on a kiosk,
20 apply and be hired for the position, and then later may learn of the bonus program of the employment service and try to claim a bonus. Therefore, in an alternate embodiment of the present invention, to receive a signing bonus, an applicant must reference the employment service provider when applying to an employer for a position. In other words, the applicant must inform the employer that she learned of the position opening
25 by viewing job listings of the employment service. In this manner, the employer recognizes in advance that the applicant is expecting a signing bonus and that the employer owes the employment service provider an advertising fee to cover the bonus, thereby avoiding disputes between the three parties after a hiring.

 The preferred embodiment of the present invention also includes enforcement
30 policies that penalize employers who attempt to avoid paying advertising fees for the critical position applicants that they hire through the employment service. Conceivably,

an employer could attempt to pay the bonus directly to the applicant and avoid paying the advertising fee to the service. The employment service would discover this when following up with the employer or hired employee. In response, the present invention provides that, in such a case, the employment service either bars the employer from using
5 the service or penalizes the employer by charging more for future service.

Once the employment service provider is aware of a hiring, the present invention implements the billing and incentive features. For the non-critical position applicant, the employment service provider enters the applicant's name in the pool of hires for a particular period of time, *e.g.*, a week, and informs the applicant of her eligibility for a
10 prize. After the drawing, the employment service provider delivers the prize to the applicant, assuming she won.

For the critical position applicant, before delivering the incentive (signing bonus) to the applicant, the employment service provider first bills the employer for the successful hiring. The bill is for the advertising fee agreed upon by the employer and
15 employment service provider at the time of contracting and service registration. The amount of the advertising fee depends on such factors as the market demand for a particular position and the salary associated with a particular position. The employment service provider could, for example, charge higher advertising fees for job listings listing positions that are in high demand. Once the employer pays or commits to pay the
20 advertising fee, the employment service provider gives the signing bonus to the applicant.

Thus, through a creative incentive and billing plan, the present invention provides an essentially self-perpetuating employment service. On the front side, monetary and prize incentives attract job seekers to use the employment service instead of other traditional Internet job sites. This popularity, in turn, attracts employers to the service
25 because of the increased exposure that advertisements receive and the heightened possibility of filling positions. In addition, the employers have little to lose in the beginning. Aside from a (possible) nominal subscription fee, the employers receive free advertising for their businesses, the right to post unlimited job listings, and pay nothing for the successful hirings of non-critical position applicants. Only when an employer
30 hires a critical applicant does the employer pay the service provider the advertising fee. And, typically, employers are more than willing to pay for this successful result.

The incentive programs and pay-only-for-results policy also encourage repetitive use by both employers and job seekers. Thus, the employment service of the present invention provides a steadily increasing base of customers. Applicants who accept positions and receive bonuses will most certainly relate the favorable experiences to colleagues. Seeing the benefits, these colleagues will also use the service. Further, each applicant who has successfully used the service will return to it for future job searches. The same holds true for employers. Thus, the present invention uses incentives and contingent billing to provide a successful employment service that draws large numbers of job seekers and employers.

10 Website Operation:

The method of operating the website and exchanging information with a user depends upon whether the user is a job applicant or an employer. Accordingly, the discussion below and the corresponding flowcharts and screen images of Figures 2a-2b separately address the two types of access, by applicant and by employer.

15 As an overview, Figure 2a illustrates a preferred data access page hierarchy (also referred to as a site map) of the present invention. When a user first enters the website, the system displays a home page, represented by the top data access page 200. As Figure 2a shows, the user can enter five separate menu options offering the separate functions of the present invention: 1) job search 202 (corresponding to read-only access of the job listing database); 2) employer search 204 (corresponding to read-only access of the employer information database); 3) employer information entry 206 (corresponding to edit access of the employer information database); 4) job listing entry 208 (corresponding to edit access of the job listing database); and 5) applicant information entry 210 (corresponding to edit access of the résumé database). Both employers and applicants have access to the job search data access pages 202 and the employer search data access pages 204. Applicants have secured access, e.g., using a user identification and password, to the applicant information entry pages 210 to enter and revise résumé information. Finally, employers have secured access to employer information data access pages 206 and job listing entry data access pages 208 to enter and revise employer data and job listings, respectively.

Figure 2b shows a preferred embodiment of the home page that is displayed upon entry into the website. The home page contains introductory information regarding the site, some explanatory remarks, and a geographic map illustrating the locations served by the employment service. Preferably, the user navigates through the system using the options presented on the home page. Preferably, the home page displays to the user a number of options (*e.g.*, in the form of buttons, or highlighted or underlined text, displayed on the home page, which are clicked-on to make a selection). Broadly, these options include functions such as searching the job listings, searching employers, entering and editing résumé information, entering and editing employer information, and entering and editing job listings. The options (buttons) on the home page correspond to the data access pages 202, 204, 206, 208, and 210 shown in Figure 2a. Preferably, the home page features two additional buttons for information links (*e.g.*, hyperlinks to related informational websites) and “about us” information (*e.g.*, giving contact information and company information about the employment service provider). Also, preferably, a user can click on the map shown on the home page to focus on a particular geographic region to restrict the functions of buttons to that particular geographic region (*e.g.*, click on the northeast United States to search for jobs in that region).

Figures 2c and 2d illustrate alternate preferred embodiments of the site map and home page, respectively. This alternate site map and home page provide the same general functions described for Figures 2a and 2b, but do so using a slightly different site structure. Data access page 260 of Figure 2c corresponds to the home page 280 displayed in Figure 2d. Reference numerals 261-273 are labeled identically between Figures 2c and 2d to show which data access pages of Figure 2c correspond to which options (buttons) of Figure 2d.

Figure 2c also illustrates additional functions accessible through the options of the home page. For example, after clicking through client access 263, a user (employer) can edit facility and job information, and can access the résumé database, resources, and message boards. Through links 264, a user can access specialty sites containing specific information for particular disciplines, such as operating room nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists. Through quick search 272 and advanced search 273, a user can access the search functions of the present invention (discussed in detail below). As a

final example, through My eMedJobs 261, a user (applicant) can access resources, saved searches, stored résumés, profiles, and message boards. Home page 280 of Figure 2c also includes options for accessing relocation resources 274 (to aid an applicant in moving to a new job), sending résumés 275, and accessing hospital information 276.

5 Overall, the home page acts as the gateway to the remaining functions of the present invention. As mentioned above, the method by which the employment service accommodates a user depends upon whether the user is an applicant or an employer. Although initial access of the website via the home page is the same for both types of users, the method of the present invention following the click-through of the home page
10 differs for each. Therefore, the following discussion and associated figures address each type of user separately.

In addition, although the following discussion and figures present the remaining functions of the present invention within the context of the site map and home page shown in Figures 2a and 2b, as one of ordinary skill in the art would appreciate, the same
15 functions would apply equally as well to the embodiments of the site map and home page shown in Figures 2c and 2d.

Employee/Applicant:

Figure 3 is a flowchart illustrating the ways in which a potential employee can navigate through the website and interface with the databases. (Figure 3a shows the
20 legend for symbols used in the flowcharts in this application.) In Figure 3, step 300 represents an applicant's initial access to the home page using an Internet address, *e.g.*, eMedJobs.com. This step 300 brings the applicant to the page illustrated in Figure 2b. From this page, the applicant can opt for one of three main functions: 1) searching the job listings (step 302) by clicking button 212, text 213, text 214, or map 215 in Figure 2b; 2)
25 developing a résumé profile (step 304) by clicking button 216 or text 217 in Figure 2b; or 3) searching employers, *i.e.*, hospitals and facilities (step 306) by clicking text 218 in Figure 2b. Other minor functions, not shown in Figure 3, include clicking on the information links button 220 or text 221, and the "about us" button 222 or text 223 shown in Figure 2b. If the applicant chooses to search job listings, the website presents a job
30 search page 400, as shown in Figure 4. If the applicant opted for the job search function by clicking on a region or state in the map 215, the job search page 400 is restricted to

that region or state. In Figure 3, step 308 represents clicking on map 215, while step 310 represents clicking button 212, text 213, or text 214. In step 312, the applicant responds to the job search page 400 by selecting one or more metro areas or one or more cities 402, and one or more position categories 404 and one or more specialties 406. An
5 applicant does not necessarily have to make a 15 selection for every field. However, the more criteria the applicant specifies, the more focused the search is and the fewer job listings are returned.

In step 314, the website searches the job listing database in accordance with the search criteria chosen by the applicant. As shown in Figure 5, the website returns a job
10 results page 500 listing the corresponding job openings 502. The listings include data such as the type of position, the city, state, and name of the employer, and the job description and salary range. The job results page 500 prompts the applicant to scroll or browse through the listings by clicking arrow buttons 504 and requests that the applicant click on a position listing for more details.

15 Having identified a listing in which she is interested, the applicant clicks on the listing 506. In step 316, the website returns a job details page 600, as shown in Figure 6. Job details page 600 lists the specific requirements of the position including such criteria as experience, education, and shift assignments. The job details page 600 is formatted the same for all position such that an applicant can easily locate the information and
20 compare listings. Job details page 600 also prompts the applicant to click on the facility name 602 to view details about the 10 facility.

In step 318, the applicant clicks on the facility name 602 and the website returns a facility details page 700, as shown in Figure 7. Facility detail page 700 features more information about the facility including, for example, contact information, size,
25 departments, and a narrative description furnished by the facility. As with the other pages, facility detail page 700 is formatted the same for all employers for applicants' ease of use. In addition, facility details page 700 prompts the applicant to click on department titles to learn more information.

In step 320, the applicant clicks on a department title 702 and the website returns
30 a department details page 800, as shown in Figure 8. Department details page 800 provides more detailed information about the department, *e.g.*, number of beds. Again,

the page organizes the information in a uniform manner to make the applicant's review easier.

At the end of this search or at any point during the search, the applicant can return to previous screens by clicking the menu buttons 804 or text 802 listed on this (Figure 8) and every other page. Alternatively, the applicant can use the "go to" or "back and forward" features of an Internet browser software.

Returning to the home page, in step 322 of Figure 3, the applicant chooses to search hospital and facility information (by clicking on text 218 in Figure 2b). In response, the website returns a facility search page 900, as shown in Figure 9. Facility search page 900 prompts the applicant to choose one or more metro areas or one or more cities 902, and one or more specialties 904 and one or more facility types 906. An applicant does not necessarily have to make a selection for every field. However, the more criteria the applicant specifies, the more focused the search is and the fewer facility listings are returned.

In step 324, the applicant makes the desired selections and clicks search. In response, the website searches the employer information database in accordance with the search criteria chosen by the applicant. The employer information database contains information on all employers in a given field, *e.g.*, healthcare facilities, and not solely the employers participating in the employment service. As shown in Figure 10, the website returns a facility results page 1000 listing the corresponding facilities 1002. The listings include data such as the name, city, state, and size of the employer. Facility results page 1000 prompts the applicant to scroll or browse through the listings by clicking arrow buttons 1004 and requests that the applicant click on a facility listing for more details.

In step 326, the applicant clicks on a facility on the list. In step 328, the website returns a facility details page like the screen shown in Figure 7 and described above for step 318. The screen lists departments of the facility, one of which the applicant chooses (clicks on). In step 330, the website returns a department details page like the screen shown in Figure 8 and described above for step 320.

Returning to the home page, in step 332, to enter or edit her résumé, the applicant clicks on button 216 or text 217 in Figure 2b. In step 334, the website displays a login page that requests the applicant's user identification and password. The applicant

receives this user identification and password when registering for the service. This secure access ensures that persons other than applicant cannot tamper with the information. In step 336, the website presents an edit profile page that lists the résumé information in fields and allows the applicant to enter information into each field or edit
5 the information in each field. The fields correspond to the structure of the résumé database and entries by the applicant are stored in the résumé database.

In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, data entered through the edit profile page is saved temporarily before being stored permanently in the résumé database. This holding period allows the employment service provider to review the data
10 for accuracy and correct form. In addition, the employment service provider ensures that field descriptions comply with uniform descriptions so that the search functions work properly.

Employer:

Figure 11a is a flowchart illustrating the ways in which an employer can navigate
15 through the website and interface with the databases. (Figure 3a shows the legend for symbols used in the flowcharts in this application.) In Figure 11a, step 1100 represents an employer's initial access to the home page using an Internet address, *e.g.*, eMedJobs.com. This step 1100 brings the employer to the home page illustrated in Figure 2b. From this page, the employer can opt for one of three main functions: 1)
20 entering job listings (step 1102) by clicking button 250 or text 251 in Figure 2b; 2) entering employer information (step 1104) by clicking button 252 or text 253 in Figure 2b; or 3) searching résumé profiles (step 1106) by clicking button 216 or text 217 in Figure 2b. Other minor functions, not shown in Figure 11a, include clicking on the information links button 220 or text 221, and the "about us" button 222 or text 223 shown
25 in Figure 2b.

If the employer chooses to enter job listings, the website in step 1108
15 presents a login page for secured access to the job listing database. The login page requests the employer's user identification and password (assigned to the employer at service initiation). When the employer enters a valid user identification and password, the
30 system consults the job listing database for the facilities and listings corresponding to the employer.

In step 1110, the website displays a facilities page that list facilities to which the employer has access and prompts the employer to click on a facility to see the listings associated with that facility. The employer can scroll through and browse this facilities page using arrow buttons.

5 In step 1112, the employer selects and clicks on a facility to see the associated job listings. In response, in step 1114, the website returns a list of the openings for the facility and prompts the employer to choose one of two options: 1) add a new job listing or 2) edit an existing job listing. If the employer elects to create a new job listing, in step 1116 (Figure 11b), the website presents a job listing data entry page with empty data
10 fields. In step 1118 (Figure 11b), the employer enters information into each field, and in step 1120 (Figure 11b), the website saves the job listing data in the job listing database.

If the employer chooses, in step 1122 (Figure 11a), to edit an existing job listing, the website locates the listing in the job listing database and presents the current information for each data field. Figures 12a-12c illustrate the preferred embodiment of
15 the web page through which the job opening is edited. In step 1124 (Figure 11b), the employer edits the fields as desired, and in step 1126, the website replaces the previous file in the job listing database with the new, updated job listing information.

In the preferred embodiment, before information is saved to job listing database in steps 1120 and 1126, the information is temporarily held for review by the employment
20 placement service. In this manner, the employment placement service can verify that the content of the entries is accurate and matches the required search categories.

Returning to the home page shown in Figure 2b and represented by step 1100 in Figure 11a, the employer now chooses to enter employer information in step 1104. In response, in step 1128, the system displays a login page that prompts the employer for a
25 user identification and password. In step 1130, after an acceptable login, the system displays a list of the employers and the employer chooses its name. Preferably, access to the employer information is secured such that one employer may not access another's information.

In step 1132, the system searches the employer information database. Upon
30 finding the employer's entry in the database, the system displays the employer's information. Figures 13a-13e illustrate the preferred embodiment of the web page

through which the employer information (both general information and department information) is edited. The employer can then edit the general employer data and facility description. When the entries and edits are complete, the website saves the information to the employer information database. This employer information entry page also
5 contains options to display the more detailed department information.

In step 1134, the employer chooses to edit the department information. In response, the website again searches the employer information database and returns the appropriate information. In step 1136, the website presents a department information page through which the employer can edit and enter information. When the employer has
10 finished entering the department information, the website saves the data to the employer information database.

Returning to the home page shown in Figure 2b and represented by step 1100 in Figure 11a, the employer now chooses to search applicant résumés in step 1106. This service is only available to employer subscribers of the employment service. Therefore,
15 access is secured using user identifications and passwords. In step 1138, the employer enters the login information.

In step 1140, the website presents a résumé search page that lists the data field corresponding to the résumé database. The employer is prompted to choose types for each field. Thus, for example, if the employer is looking for registered nurses in a
20 particular state, the employer would choose the particular state in the residence field and “registered nurse” in the type of position field. Depending on the number of fields the employer chooses, the search can be as broad or narrow as needed.

In step 1142, the employer selects the field criteria. In response, the system searches the résumé database for matching entries, and in step 1144, returns a list of
25 applicant résumés. The employer can then record the information for each qualified applicant and contact the applicants to proceed with the hiring process.

Further Embodiments:

In addition to the above-described methods, further preferred embodiments of the present invention provide additional features for employment placement. For instance,
30 because the employment service is self-perpetuating and financed by employers, there is no advertising other than the job listings. Prohibiting advertising is advantageous to both

applicants and employers because it increases the speed of the website and does not distract viewers from focusing on the objective of the website: to facilitate successful hirings.

Another feature of the present invention relates to information exchange. Once an
5 applicant has entered a résumé, the present invention provides means to send that information to multiple employers. The applicant can edit the résumé at any time and can archive different versions of the résumé to accommodate different job searches.

In addition, both the employer and applicant can set up automatic email notification that informs the entry of an applicant or position that meets their needs.
10 Thus, the employer can specify candidate requirements, and if a résumé is received that matches those requirements, the system automatically emails the résumé to the employer. Conversely, if the applicant can specify a desired job (*e.g.*, by region or employer), and if a position listing is posted that meets that desired job, the system sends an email to the applicant notifying her of the opening.

15 Related to this automatic email notification, in accordance with another aspect of the present invention, the system saves search queries of both applicants and employers. Saving past queries in a database enables a variety of functional advantages. To begin with, a user (employer or applicant) may retrieve past queries to perform updated searches more easily. In addition, the system can compare new listings to past queries
20 and can notify the searcher when a new listing matches his past query.

Moreover, search queries are by themselves valuable data in so far as they are indicative of what users are looking for. Through statistical analysis and other data mining techniques, the system of the present invention analyzes the saved search queries to provide information to users concerning market conditions and demand. The system
25 can also make recommendations as to whether a bonus should be offered and, if so, in what amount.

As another feature, the employment service periodically emails employers to notify them of job listings that have been posted on the website for a long period of time without change. For example, every six months, the employment service would send a
30 message to employers detailing job listings that have not changed for that period. The message would prompt the employer to remove or edit the postings to bring them up to

date. To implement this service, the website software would search the “file save dates” in the job listing database for dates six months prior.

This email reminder would also work for employer information that must be updated, *e.g.*, to reflect changes in hospital certifications or number of beds. Another
5 feature of the present invention is the ability to link the website to related specialty websites. For instance, a website devoted strictly to information and data useful to intensive care unit nurses could operate through the main website but instead draw from special databases devoted to these special types of positions.

Although the above representative embodiments have been presented in the
10 context of a web-based implementation, one of ordinary skill in the art would appreciate that certain methods of present invention apply equally well to other implementations, such as paper-based implementations. Indeed, an alternate representative embodiment provides that the broadcasting of job listings occurs by paper-based methods, for example, by distributing newspapers containing the job listings. Applicants responding
15 to these paper-based job listings are afforded the same benefits as those described above for applicants using web-based methods.

For example, in applying for a position listed in a newspaper sponsored by the employment service provider, the applicant references the employment service provider to the employer. Then, after being hired for the position and starting employment, the
20 employer pays the advertising fee to the employment service provider and the service provider pays the signing bonus to the applicant. This paper-based implementation can operate independently, or can operate as a complement to a web-based implementation. The paper-based implementation carries the benefit of attracting applicants who do not have Internet access. In addition, when operated as a complement to a web-based
25 implementation, the paper-based method can familiarize paper-based applicants with the service, so that when they do acquire Internet access, they will go directly to the website of the employment service provider.

As a part of the paper-based implementation, the employment service provider provides employer information in the paper job listings themselves. Thus, the job listings
30 provide uniform employer criteria that applicants can consider in deciding whether to apply. As another part of this paper-based implementation, the employment service

exchanges applicant information between the applicants and employers using paper-based submissions from applicants. For example, an employment service provider could distribute a job listings newspaper containing a response card. The response card would prompt an applicant for the applicant information that employers require in making hiring decisions, *e.g.*, degrees held, licenses held, and dates and places of previous employment. The card would also ask the applicant to indicate job listings for which she would like to apply. The applicant would return the response card to the employment service provider by, for example, mailing or faxing it.

Like the web-based entry of applicant information in data fields, the response card is an efficient way to capture standard applicant information that employers need in making hiring decisions. Essentially, the card should be brief and easy to fill out, and should be standardized so that it creates a profile for the applicant. Such convenience is especially valuable for healthcare professionals, who are typically very busy and do not have résumés already prepared.

Alternatively, instead of paper-based submissions, applicants could submit applicant information using other communication means. For example, an applicant could call an interactive voice response system that prompts the applicant for information and records the information.

According to another paper-based implementation of the present invention, the employment service exchanges applicant information between the applicants and employers by distributing to employers a paper containing applicant information. For example, the employment service could mail a newspaper to human resource representatives of healthcare facilities. The newspaper could list applicant profiles grouped by specialty (or, optionally, by some other profile category, such as geographic location). The applicant profiles could include, for example, the geographic area in which an applicant desires to work, the specialty skills the applicant possesses, and the years of experience the applicant has. In this manner, the employment service can present human resource representatives with searched and categorized applicant information, without requiring the human resource representatives to take the proactive steps of going online and visiting a particular website. If a human resource representative is interested in hiring an applicant listed in the newspaper, the human resource

representative can contact the employment service directly (by, for example, telephone or facsimile machine), or, perhaps, can go online and access the web-based features and benefits of the present invention described above.

As mentioned above, in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention, the system can be used to allow employers to bid for the services of prospective employees. Naturally, this embodiment is useful in the context of applicants for positions in high demand. To implement this feature, the system notifies employers that an applicant satisfying certain criteria is available by, for example, posting that applicant's résumé, or through direct notification, such as by email. Interested employers can then submit bids for the applicant's time. Bids could involve a combination of compensation, bonuses, working conditions, and the like. The applicant could then select the bid they find most attractive. In this example, the decision is left to the subjective determination of the applicant.

In describing representative embodiments of the present invention, the specification may have presented the method and/or process of the present invention as a particular sequence of steps. However, to the extent that the method or process does not rely on the particular order of steps set forth herein, the method or process should not be limited to the particular sequence of steps described. As one of ordinary skill in the art would appreciate, other sequences of steps may be possible. Therefore, the particular order of the steps set forth in the specification should not be construed as limitations on the claims. In addition, the claims directed to the method and/or process of the present invention should not be limited to the performance of their steps in the order written, unless that order is explicitly described as required by the description of the process in the specification. Otherwise, one skilled in the art can readily appreciate that the sequences may be varied and still remain within the spirit and scope of the present invention.

The foregoing disclosure of embodiments of the present invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise forms disclosed. Many variations and modifications of the embodiments described herein will be obvious to one of ordinary

skill in the art in light of the above disclosure. The scope of the invention is to be defined only by the claims appended hereto, and by their equivalents.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for providing an employment placement service comprising the steps of:
 - (a) broadcasting job listings of employers;
 - 5 (b) providing employer information about the employers;
 - (c) exchanging applicant information between applicants and the employers;
 - and
 - (d) charging the employers only for job listings that produce hirings.
- 10 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of charging comprises charging the employers only for job listings that produce hirings for critical hire positions.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of giving an applicant a signing bonus if the applicant uses the service to locate an employer and if the employer
15 hires the applicant.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the applicant must be hired for a critical hire position.
- 20 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising entering applicants in a drawing for a prize, wherein the applicants have been hired through the service during a specified period.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein the applicants who have been hired through the
25 service during a specified period are applicants for non-critical hire positions.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the employer information is uniform criteria for all of the employers.
- 30 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the employers are health care providers.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing employer information further comprises providing employer information about employers that are not posting job listings on the service.
- 5 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of searching the job listings, the employer information, and the applicant information.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of providing employer information comprises searching for an employer matching particular employer information desired
10 by an applicant.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein if the searching does not return a matching employer, then the method further comprises the steps of:
- (i) storing the particular employer information desired by the applicant;
 - 15 (ii) periodically searching for the particular employer information desired by the applicant; and
 - (iii) notifying the applicant when the searching returns a matching employer.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein the step of notifying the applicant comprises
20 sending an email to the applicant.
14. The method of claim 12, further comprising the steps of:
- storing particular employer information desired by multiple applicants; and
 - analyzing the stored particular employer information to provide information as to
25 demand for certain employer criteria.
15. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of exchanging applicant information between applicants and employers comprises storing applicant qualifications in a database searchable by the employers.
- 30

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising searching the database for an applicant matching particular applicant qualifications desired by an employer.
17. The method of claim 16, wherein if the searching does not return a matching applicant, then the method further comprises the steps of:
- 5 (i) storing the particular applicant qualifications desired by an employer;
- (ii) periodically searching for the particular applicant qualifications desired by an employer; and
- (iii) notifying the employer when the searching returns a matching applicant.
- 10 18. The method of claim 17, wherein the step of notifying the employer comprises sending an email to the employer.
19. The method of claim 17, further comprising the steps of:
- 15 storing particular applicant qualifications desired by multiple employers; and
- analyzing the stored particular applicant qualifications to provide information as to demand for certain specialties.
20. The method of claim 15, wherein the qualifications are stored in an applicant file
- 20 and the applicant file is marked inactive such that the applicant file is not searched.
21. The method of claim 1, wherein exchanging applicant information between applicants and employers is accomplished by electronic mail.
- 25 22. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of charging the employers a subscription fee separate from charges for the job listings that produce hirings.
23. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of broadcasting comprises distributing a paper that contains the job listings, wherein the paper includes a response card,
- 30 wherein the step of providing employer information comprises providing uniform employer criteria in the job listings, and

wherein the step of exchanging applicant information comprises receiving response cards from the applicants.

24. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of broadcasting comprises distributing a paper that contains the job listings,

wherein the step of providing employer information comprises providing uniform employer criteria in the job listings, and

wherein the step of exchanging applicant information comprises receiving telephone calls from the applicants to an interactive voice response system.

10

25. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of exchanging applicant information comprises distributing a paper that contains the applicant information, and wherein the method further comprises distributing the paper to employers that are not posting job listings on the service.

15

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the paper is distributed to human resource representatives of the employers and to human resource representatives of the employers that are not posting job listings on the service.

20 27. A method for providing an employment placement service comprising the steps of:

- (a) broadcasting job listings of employers;
- (b) providing employer information about the employers;
- (c) exchanging applicant information between applicants and the employers;

25 and

(d) awarding an applicant a signing bonus if an applicant uses the service to locate an employer and if the employer hires the applicant.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the signing bonus is awarded only if the employer hires the applicant for a critical hire position.

30

29. The method of claim 27, wherein awarding an applicant a signing bonus is also conditioned upon the applicant's referencing the service to an employer when applying for a job listing.

5 30. The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of entering applicants in a drawing for a prize, wherein the applicants have been hired through the service and have started employment during a specified period.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the applicants who have been hired through the
10 service and have started employment during a period are applicants for non-critical positions.

32. The method of claim 27, wherein the step of broadcasting comprises distributing a paper that contains the job listings, wherein the paper includes a response card,
15 wherein the step of providing employer information comprises providing uniform employer criteria in the job listings, and
wherein the step of exchanging applicant information comprises receiving response cards from the applicants.

20 33. The method of claim 27, wherein the step of broadcasting comprises distributing a paper that contains the job listings,
wherein the step of providing employer information comprises providing uniform employer criteria in the job listings, and
wherein the step of exchanging applicant information comprises receiving
25 telephone calls from the applicants to an interactive voice response system.

34. The method of claim 27, wherein the step of exchanging applicant information comprises distributing a paper that contains the applicant information, and wherein the method further comprises distributing the paper to employers that are not posting job
30 listings on the service.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein the paper is distributed to human resource representatives of the employers and to human resource representatives of the employers that are not posting job listings on the service.

5 36. The method of claim 27, wherein the applicant is awarded no more than two signing bonuses per year.

37. The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of charging the employers only for job listings that produce hirings.

10

38. A system for providing an employment placement service comprising:

(a) an employer information database containing uniform employer criteria of a group of employers;

15 (b) a job listing database containing job listings for a portion of the group of employers, wherein the job listings are linked to the uniform employer criteria;

(c) a résumé database containing applicant information;

20 (d) a graphical user interface that prompts applicants for the applicant information, receives the applicant information, displays the job listings, provides links from the job listings to the uniform employer criteria, and displays the uniform employer criteria.

39. The system of claim 38, wherein the uniform employer criteria is information critical to applicants of a specialized field.

25 40. The system of claim 39, wherein the specialized field is healthcare, and the uniform employer criteria includes at least one of contact information of a facility, a number of beds in the facility, a number of operating rooms in the facility, whether the facility has a trauma center, whether the facility is a teaching hospital, a listing of department specialties, a number of employees, and a narrative description of the facility.

30

41. The system of claim 38, wherein the applicant information is contact information, qualifications, and job preferences.
42. A method for placing applicants into jobs comprising the steps of:
- 5 (a) broadcasting job listings of employers to the applicants, wherein an employment service provider broadcasts the job listings;
- (b) identifying an applicant who is hired to fill a job listing of the broadcast job listings, wherein the job listing is for an employer; and
- (c) awarding a signing bonus to the applicant, wherein the employment
- 10 service provider pays the signing bonus.
43. The method of claim 42, wherein the step of broadcasting the job listings comprises posting the job listings on a global computer network.
- 15 44. The method of claim 42, wherein the step of broadcasting the job listings comprises distributing a paper that contains the job listings.
45. The method of claim 42, wherein the step of identifying the applicant who is hired to fill the job listing comprises:
- 20 (i) requiring the applicant to reference the employment service provider when applying for the job listing; and
- (ii) receiving, at the employment service provider, a notification that the applicant was hired for the job listing.
- 25 46. The method of claim 45, wherein the applicant provides the notification.
47. The method of claim 45, wherein the employer provides the notification.

48. The method of claim 47, wherein the employer provides the notification after the employment service provider determines that the job listing was deleted and after the employment service provider questions the employer.
- 5 49. The method of claim 42, wherein the job listing is for a critical hire position.
50. The method of claim 49, wherein the method further comprises the steps of:
- (i) identifying a second applicant who is hired to fill a second job listing, wherein the second job listing is for a non-critical hire position; and
- 10 (ii) entering the second applicant in a pool of applicants for a prize drawing, wherein the pool of applicants includes applicants that have been hired for non-critical hire positions during a specified period.
51. The method of claim 50, wherein the specified period is a week.
- 15 52. The method of claim 42, wherein the employer designates how much the signing bonus is.
53. The method of claim 42, further comprising the step of collecting an advertising
- 20 fee from the employer,
- wherein the employment service provider collects the advertising fee,
- wherein the advertising fee includes a fee for the employment service provider and a fee for the signing bonus, and
- wherein the employment service provider pays the signing bonus from the
- 25 advertising fee.
54. The method of claim 53, wherein the fee for the employment service provider is a percentage of the fee for the signing bonus.
- 30 55. The method of claim 42, wherein the step of broadcasting comprises:

(i) notifying a group of employers that the applicant satisfies criteria of the group of employers;

(ii) accepting bids for the applicant from the group of employers; and

(iii) allowing the applicant to choose a desired bid.

5

56. A method for filling job openings comprising the steps of:

(a) broadcasting a plurality of job listings of employers to a plurality of applicants without charging the employers an advertising fee;

(b) identifying a job listing of the plurality of job listings for which an applicant of the plurality of applicants was hired, wherein the job listing is for an employer; and

(c) charging the employer an advertising fee for the job listing for which the applicant was hired.

57. The method of claim 56, wherein the step of broadcasting comprises posting the plurality of job listings on a global computer network.

58. The method of claim 56, wherein the step of broadcasting comprises distributing papers that contain the plurality of job listings.

20

59. The method of claim 56, wherein an employment service provider broadcasts the plurality of job listings, and

wherein the step of identifying the job listing comprises:

(i) requiring the applicant to reference the employment service provider when applying for the job listing; and

(ii) receiving, at the employment service provider, a notification that the applicant was hired for the job listing.

30

60. The method of claim 59, wherein the applicant provides the notification.

61. The method of claim 59, wherein the employer provides the notification.

62. The method of claim 61, wherein the employer provides the notification after the employment service provider determines that the job listing was deleted and after the employment service provider questions the employer.

5 63. The method of claim 56, wherein the job listing is for a critical hire position.

64. The method of claim 56, further comprising the steps of paying the applicant a signing bonus, wherein the employment service provider pays the signing bonus.

10 65. The method of claim 64, wherein the advertising fee includes a fee for the employment service provider and a fee for the signing bonus.

66. The method of claim 65, wherein the employer designates how much the signing bonus is.

15

67. The method of claim 66, wherein an employment service provider broadcasts the plurality of job listings, identifies the job listing for which an applicant of the plurality of applicants was hired, and charges the employer the advertising fee.

20

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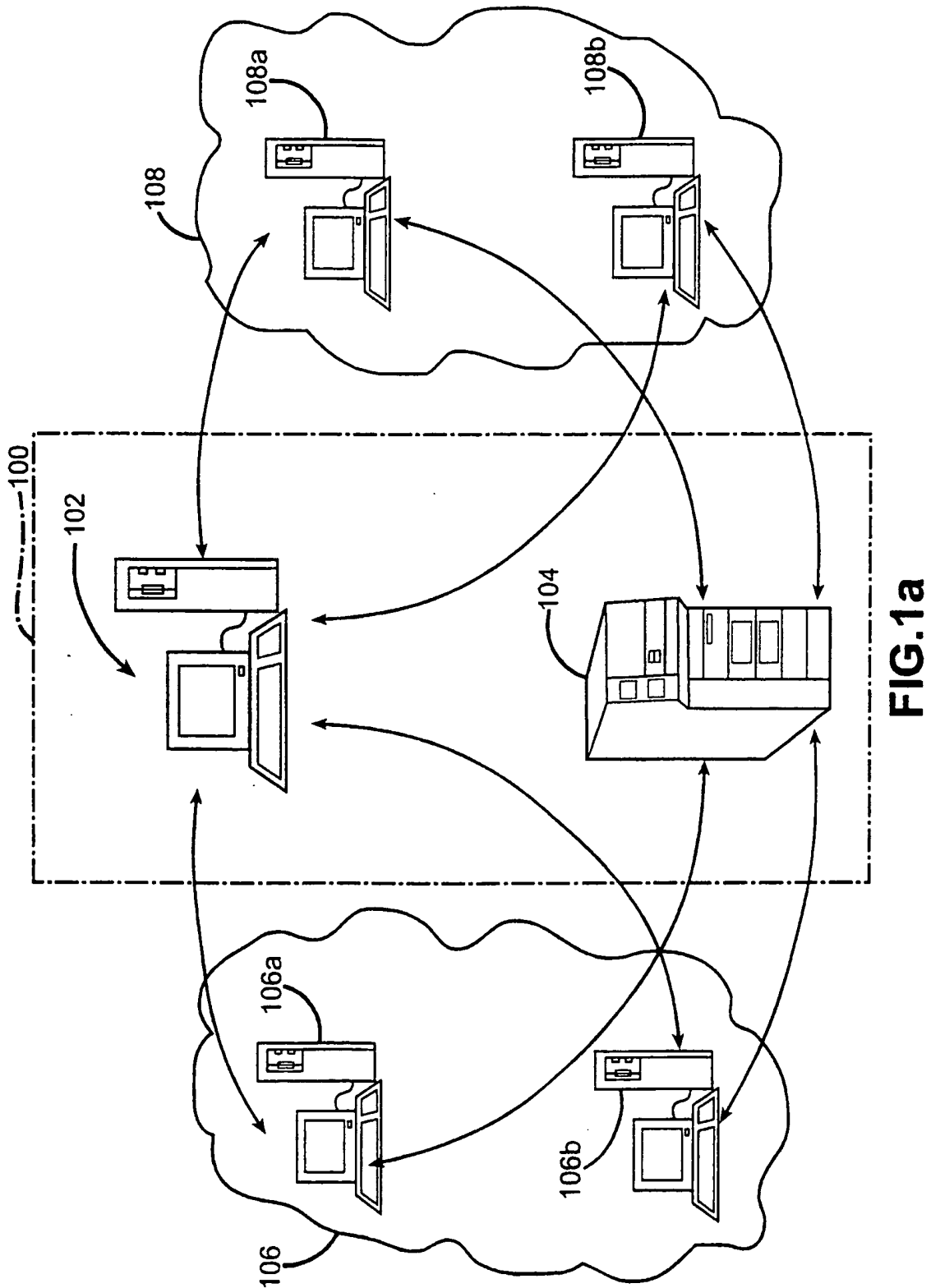
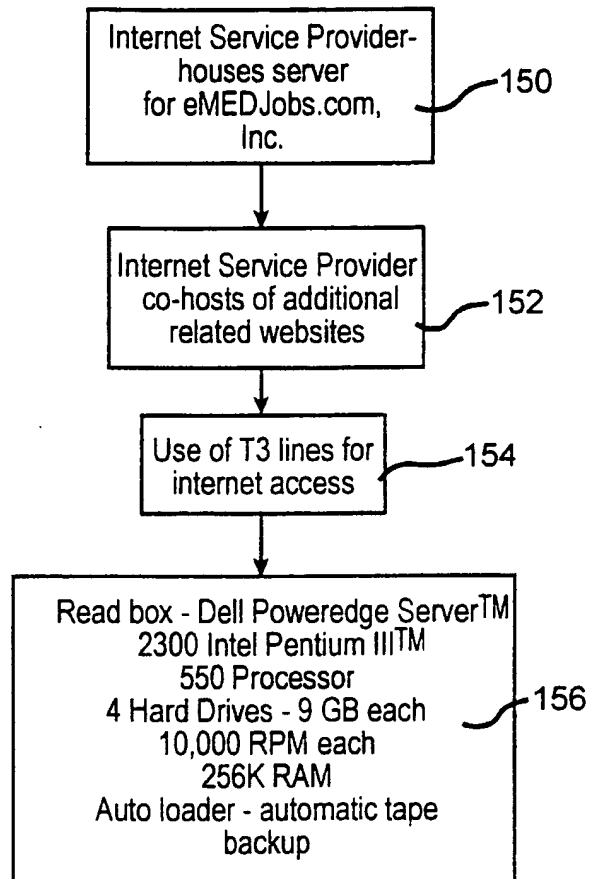


FIG. 1a

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**FIG.1b**

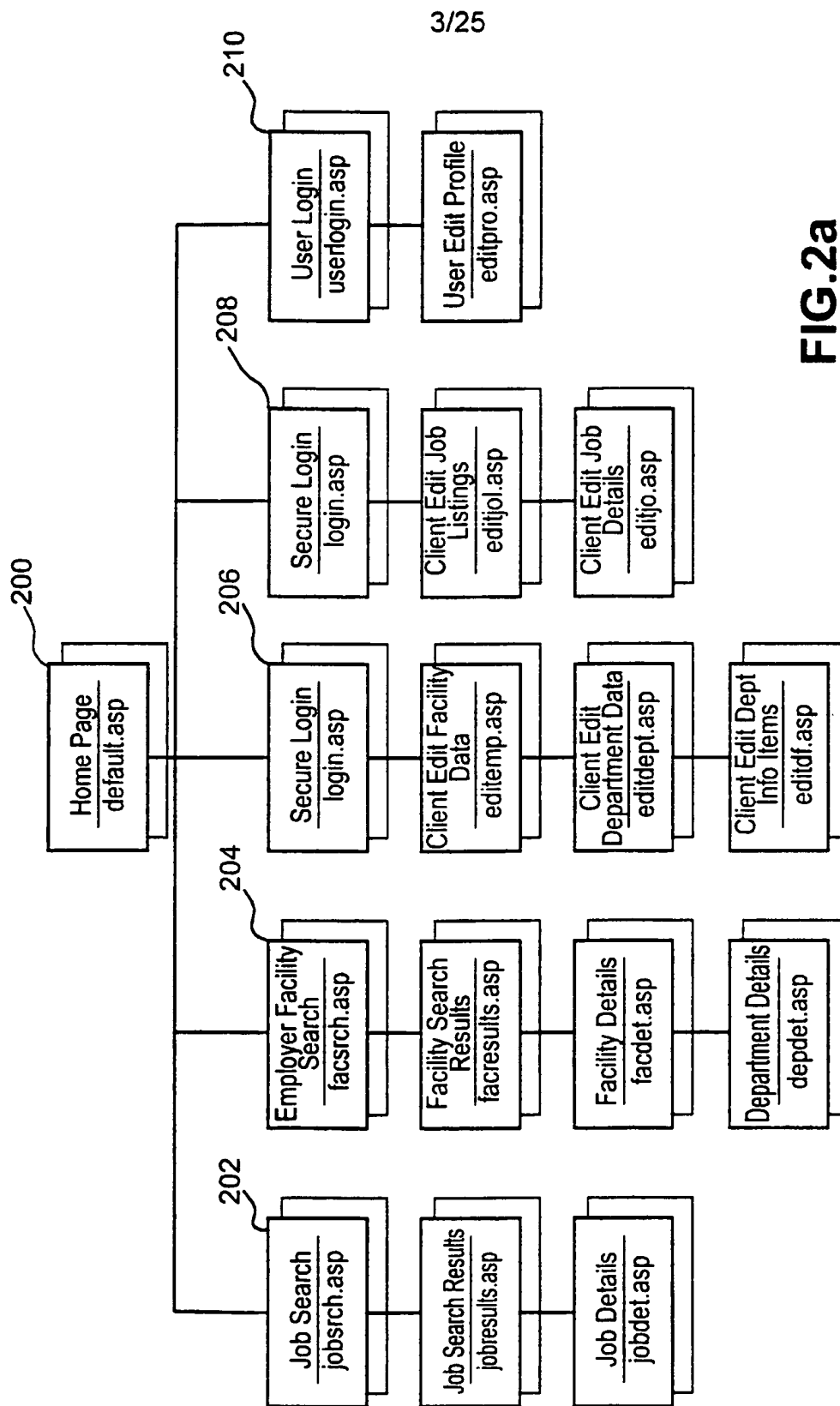
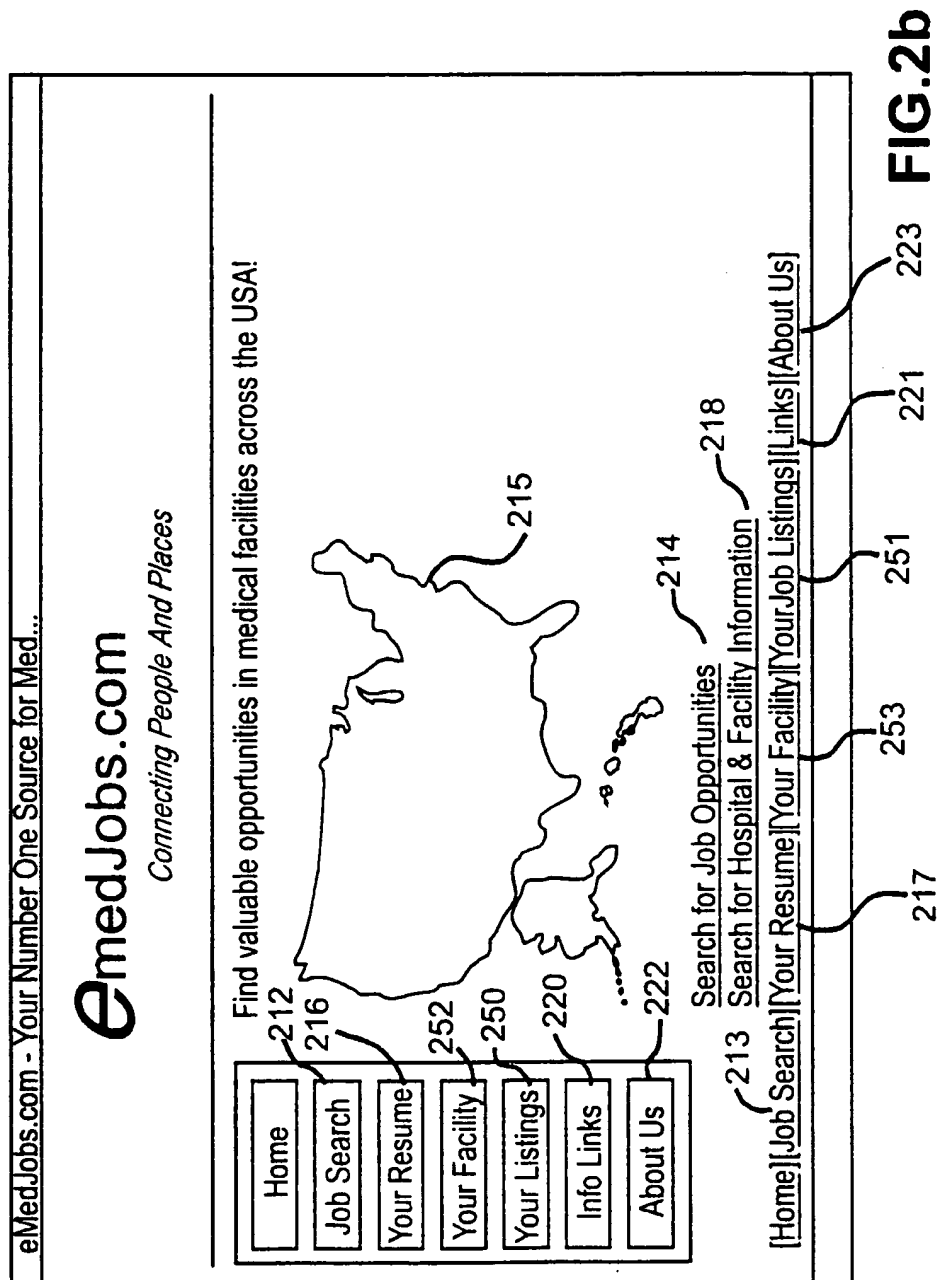


FIG. 2a

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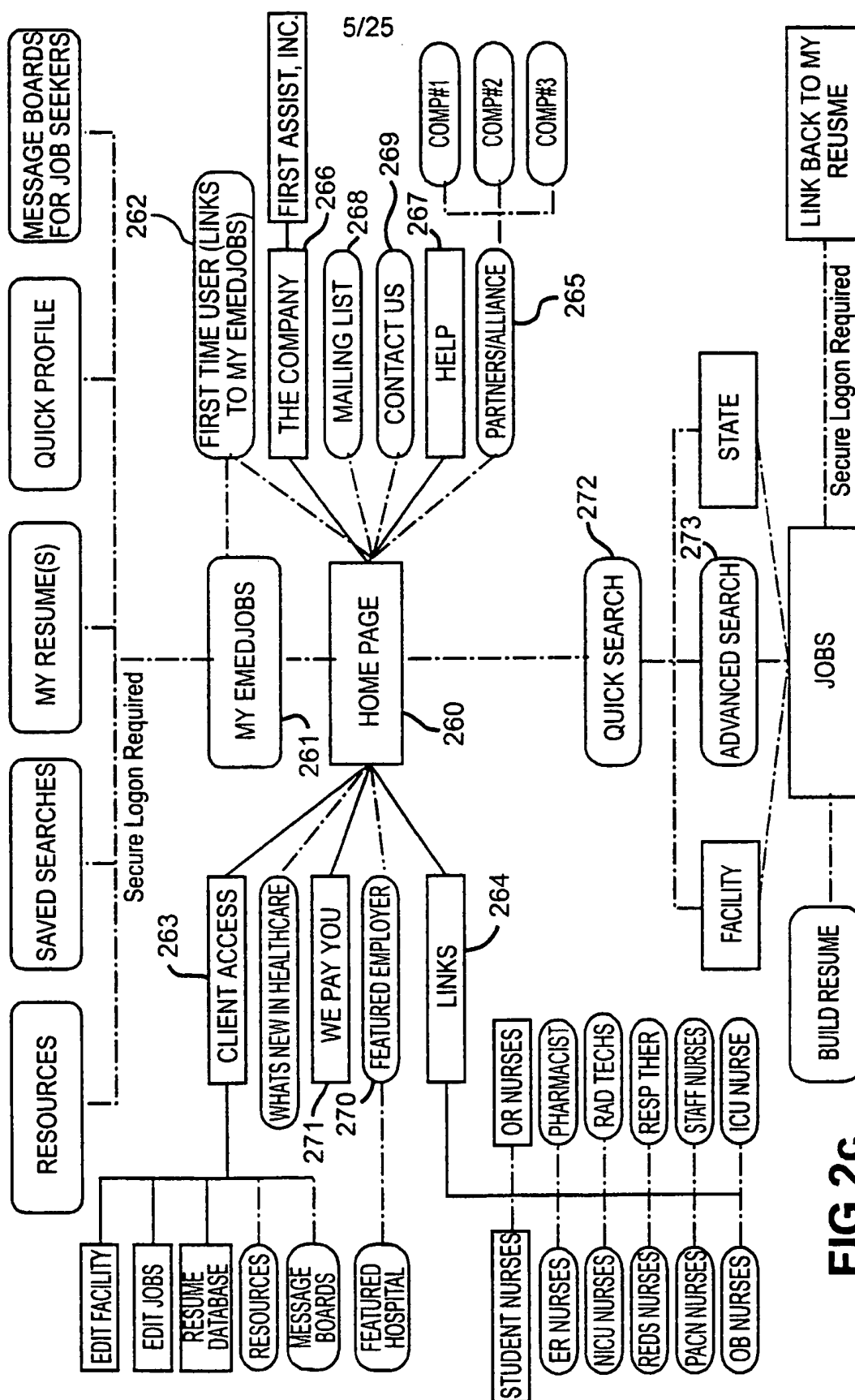






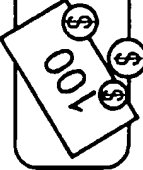



FIG. 2c

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280

FIG.2d

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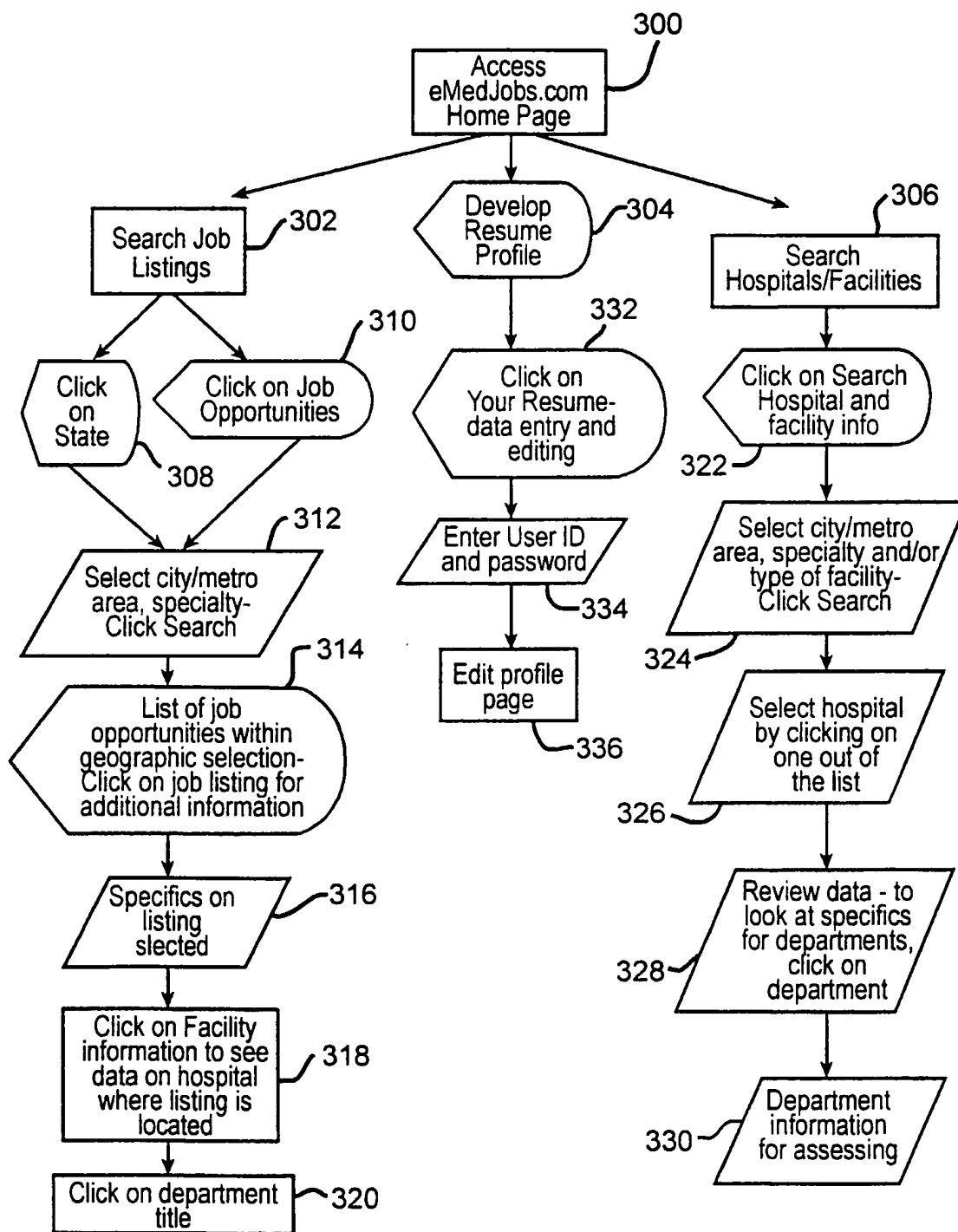
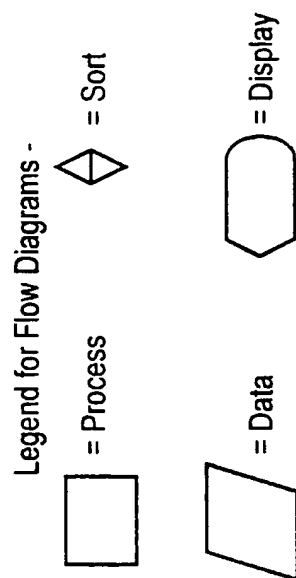


FIG.3

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**FIG.3a**

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Job Search Page

emedJobs.com

400

Home

Job Search

Your Resume

Your Facility

Your Listings

Info Links

About Us

Find the right job for you in 3 easy steps!

1. Choose one or more metro areas*

Any Metro Area

Columbia

Joplin

Kansas City, MO-KS

Springfield

or

1. Choose one or more cities

Any City

Bridgeport, MD

Chesterfield, MD

Columbia, MD

Fulton, MD

2. Choose one or more position categories

Any Job Category

Nursing-Nurse Educator/Clinician

Nursing-Staff Nurse

Nursing-LPN

Nursing-Shift Supervisor

406

3. Choose one or more specialties

Any Specialty

Nursing-Nurse Educator/Clinician

Nursing-Staff Nurse

Nursing-LPN

Nursing-Shift Supervisor

Search

402

Search

Search

404

Search

FIG. 4

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emedJobs.com

506

Your search found the following job openings. Click on a position for more details.

Position	Burlington	NC	Alamance Regional Medical Center			
Staff Nurse	Winston-Salem	NC	Wake Forest University Baptist medical Center	NURSES AIDE POSITION IN INTERMEDIATE NURSERY AREA	20,000.00	25,000.00
Nursing Assistant	Winston-Salem	NC	Wake Forest University Baptist medical Center	STAFF NURSE ON PEDS FLOOR	25,000.00	32,000.00
Staff Nurse	Winston-Salem	NC	Wake Forest University Baptist medical Center	Secretary to Director	30,000.00	38,000.00
Administrative Secretary	Winston-Salem	NC	Wake Forest University Baptist medical Center	Direct reporting relationship to Director an Asst. Director	20,000.00	28,000.00
Administrative Secretary	Winston-Salem	NC	Wake Forest University Baptist medical Center	Reports directly to Director and Asst. Director	20,000.00	25,000.00
Administrative Secretary	Winston-Salem	NC	Wake Forest University Baptist medical Center		20,000.00	25,000.00
Staff Nurse	Winston-Salem	NC	Wake Forest University Baptist medical Center		32,000.00	38,000.00
Staff Nurse	Winston-Salem	NC	Wake Forest University Baptist medical Center		34,000.00	40,000.00

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502

500

Click BACK to return to the previous search screen.

[Home] [Job Search] [Your Resume] [Your Facility] [Your Job Listings] [Links] [About Us]

FIG.5

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Job Results Page

emedJobs.com

Home

Job Search

Your Resume

Your Facility

Your Listings

Info Links

About Us

Here are the details for the position. Click on the facility name for details about the facility.

STAFF Nurse
Salary from: \$30,000 to: \$38,000 Full Time
Experience: 5+
Education: BSN
Shift: D/E
Flex Shifts: N/A
Contact:

Description
STAFF NURSE ON PEDS FLOOR

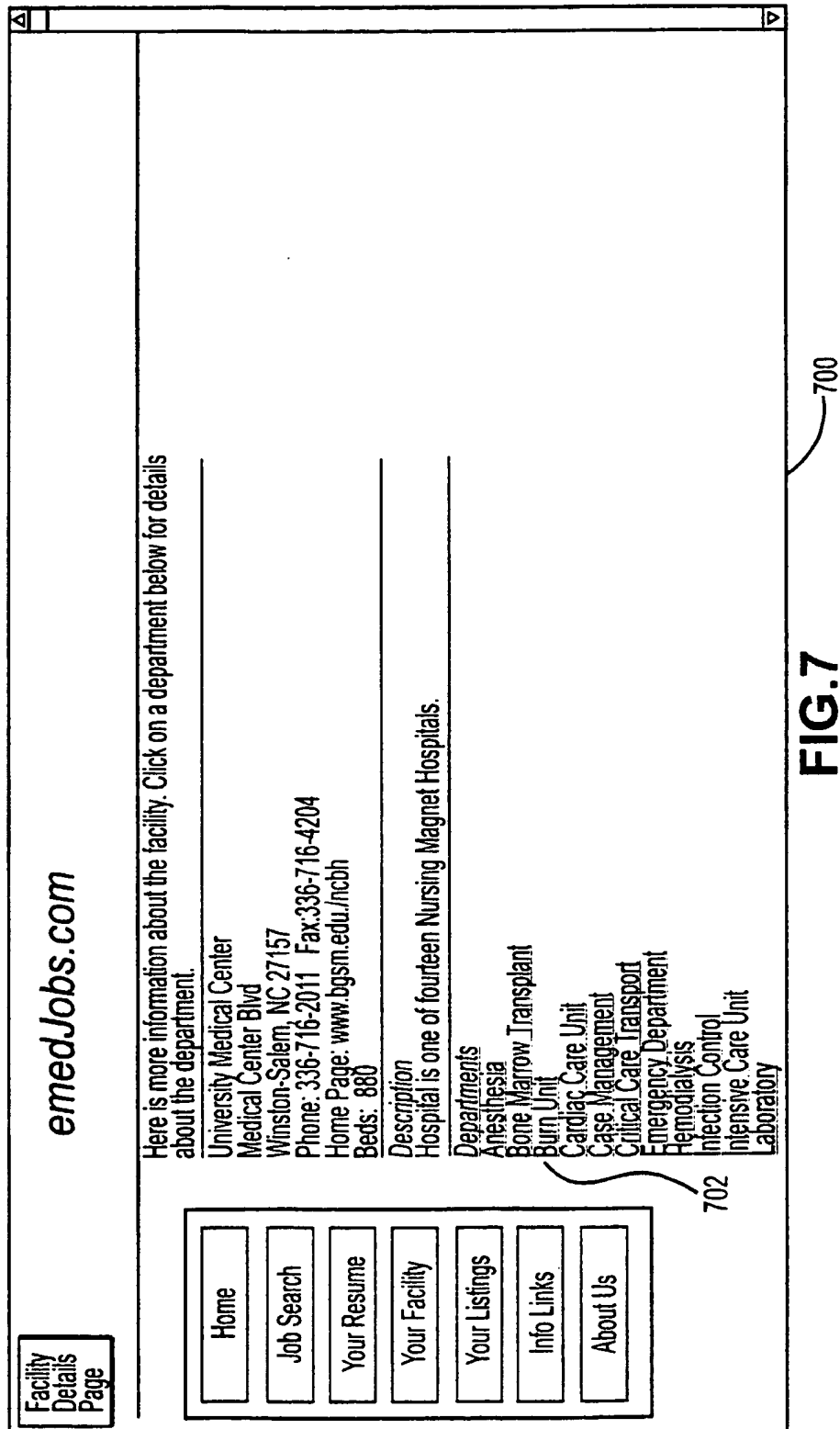
University Medical Center 602

Click BACK to choose from other job openings.

[Home] [Job Search] [Your Resume] [Your Facility] [Your Job Listings] [Links] [About Us]

FIG.6 600

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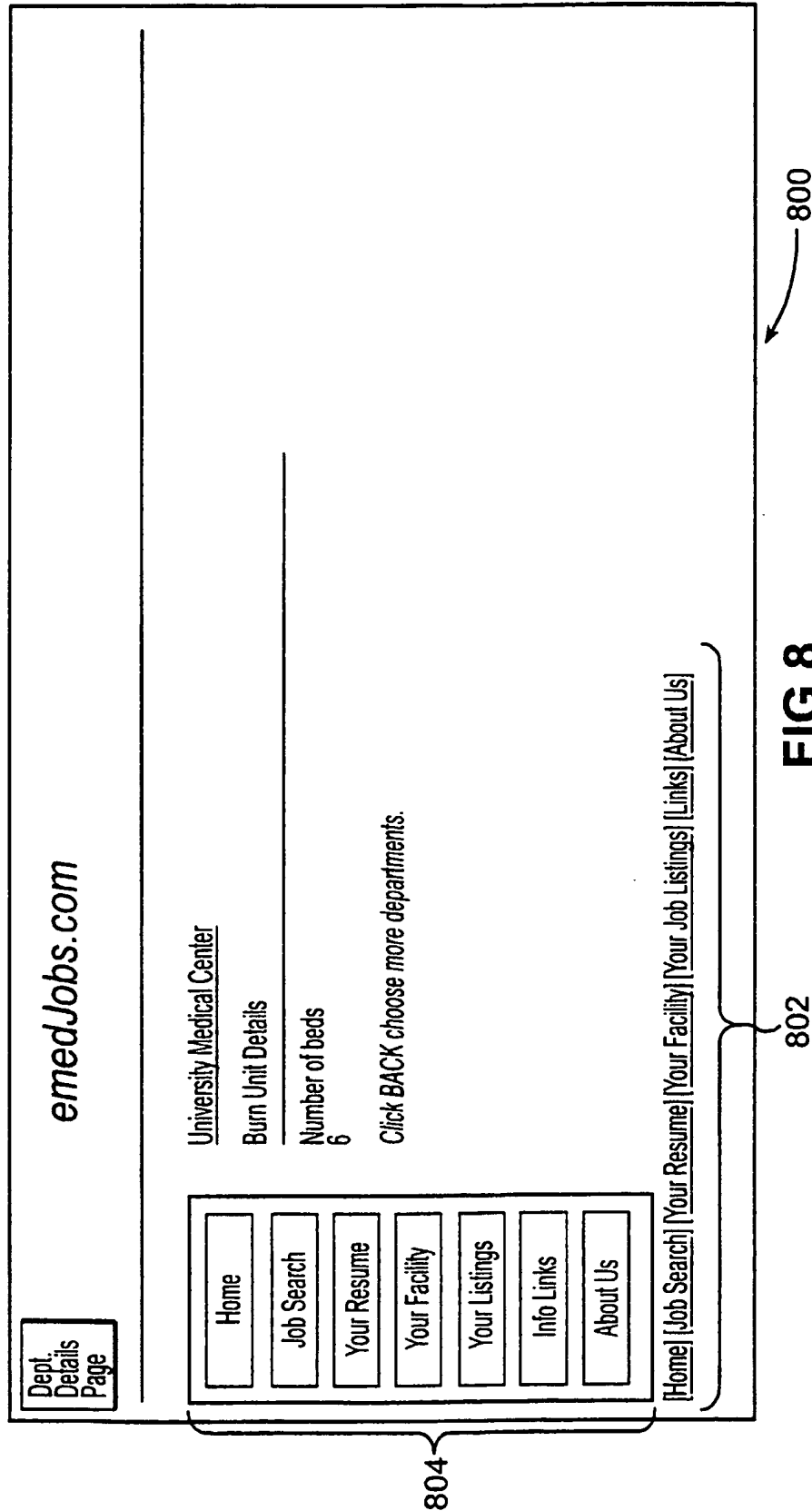


FIG. 8

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900

Facility Search Page

Home

Job Search

Your Resume

Your Facility

Your Listings

Info Links

About Us

emedJobs.com

Getting hospital information with eMedJobs is easy! Just Follow the steps below.

1. Choose one or more metro areas*

Any Metro Area

Abilene

Aquadilla

Akron

Albany

902

or

1. Choose one or more cities

Any City

Aberdeen, SD

Abilene, TX

Abington, PA

Akron, OH

904

2. Choose one or more specialties

Any Department

Anesthesia

Bone Marrow Transplant

Burn Unit

Cardiac Care unit

906

3. Choose a facility type

Any Type

Hospital

Search

Reset

FIG.9

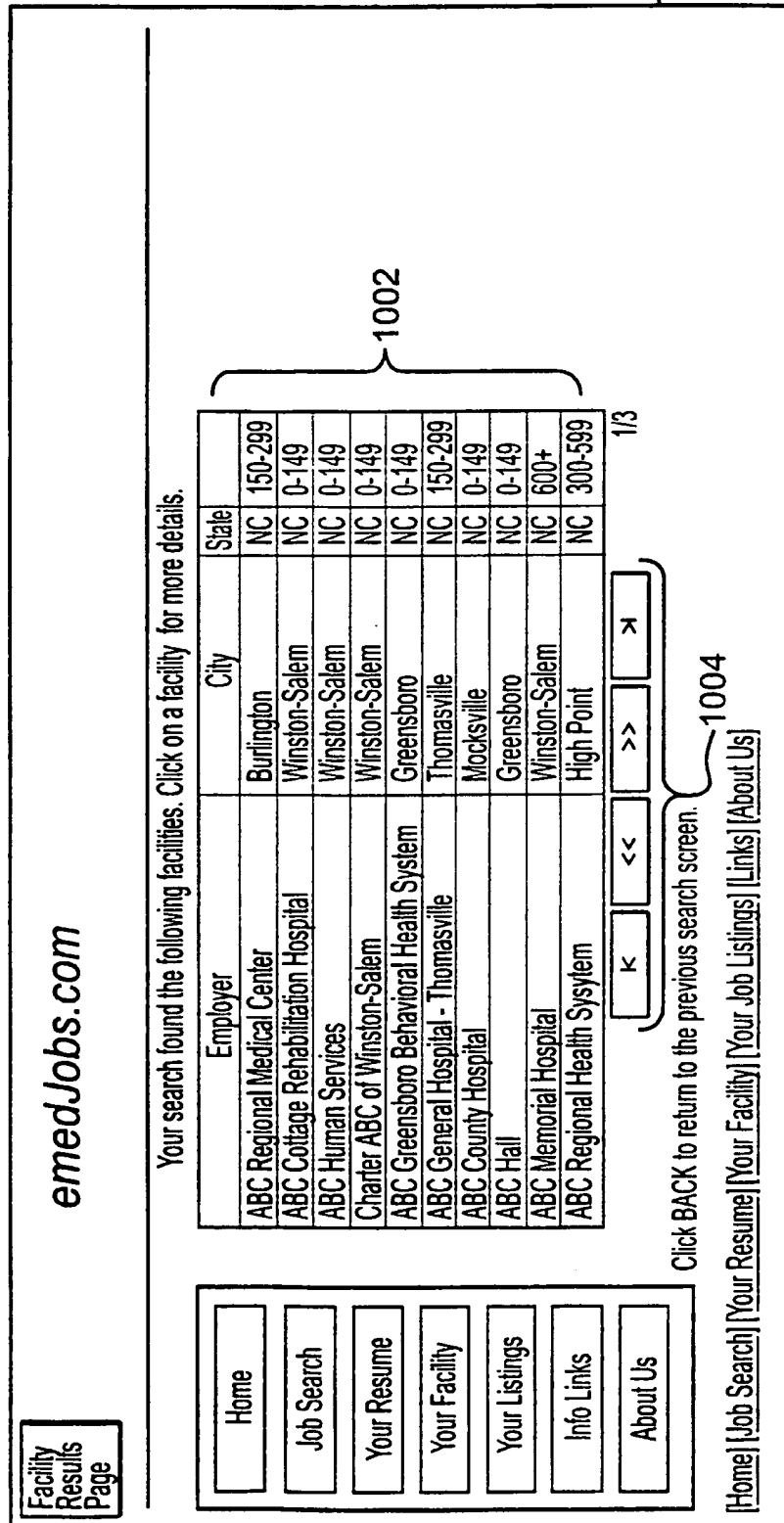


FIG. 10

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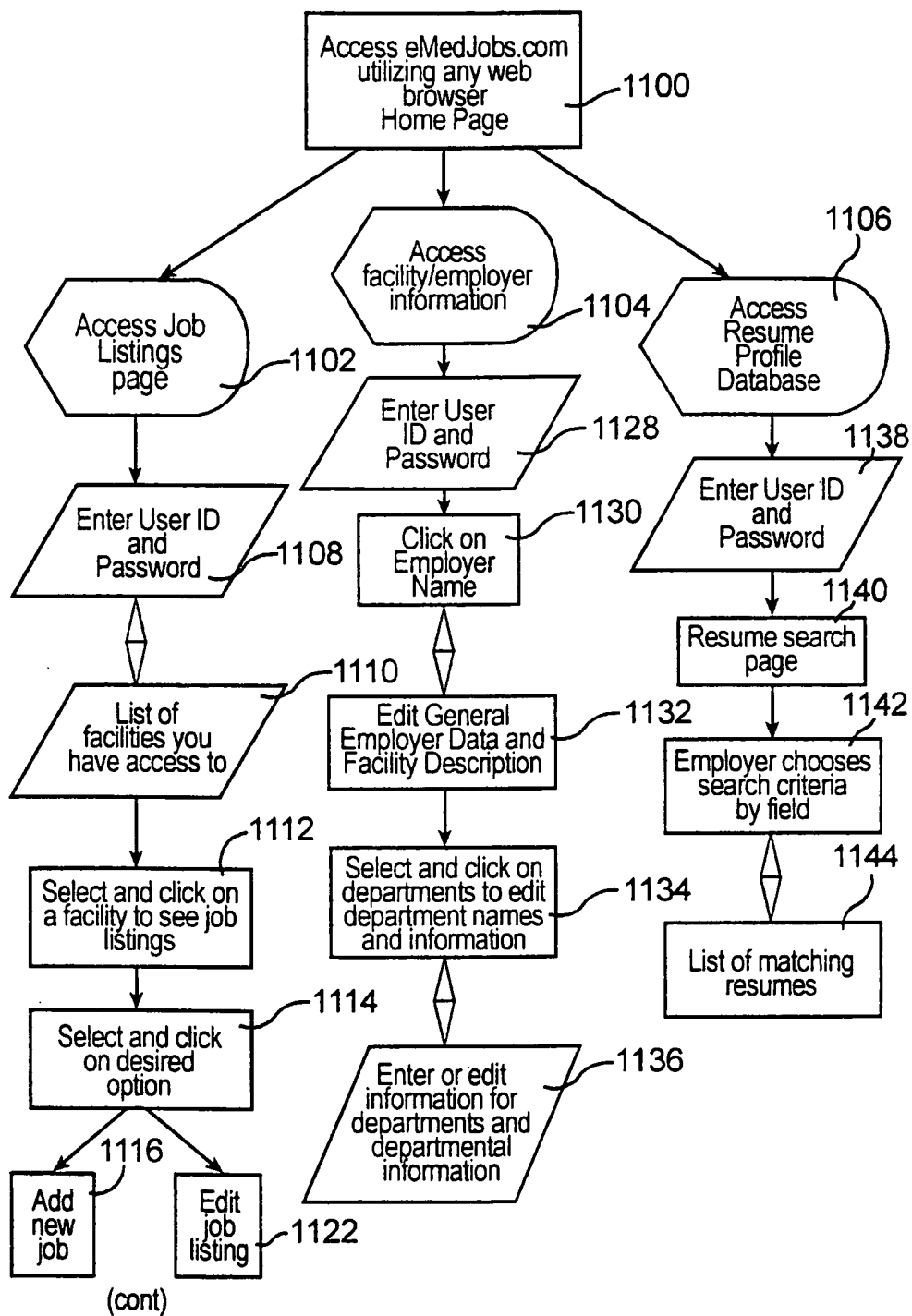


FIG.11a

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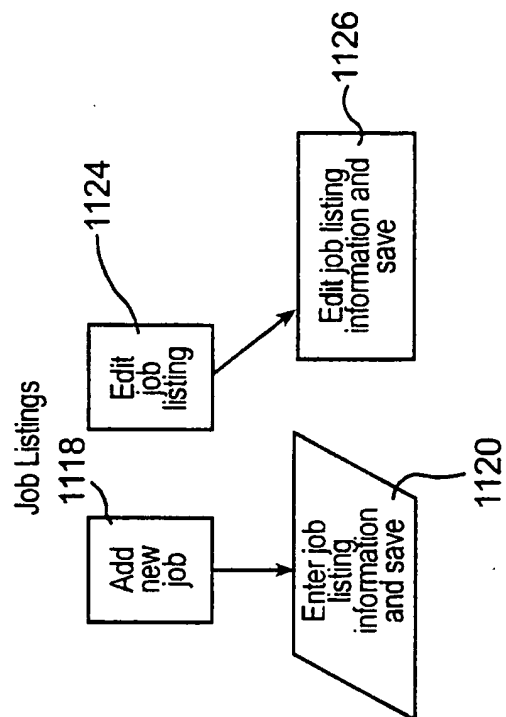


Fig.11b

<u>Circles of Care</u>			
Edit Job Opening Details		eMedJobs Home	
<input type="button" value="1 <"/>	<input type="button" value="<<"/>	<input type="button" value="Record 1 of 1"/>	<input type="button" value="Add New Job"/>
<input type="button" value="Save"/>	<input type="button" value="Delete"/>	<input type="button" value="Reset"/>	
Title <input type="text" value="test 1"/>	Your Job Number <input type="text" value="1"/>	Department <input type="text" value="Psychiatric"/>	Date Opened <input type="text" value="12/01/1999"/> Employer <input type="text" value="12/01/1999"/>
Part Time <input type="checkbox"/>			
Job Title	<input type="text" value="test 1"/>		
Your Job Number(if any)	<input type="text" value=""/>		
Job Description	<input type="text" value="Will head up a team of 6 nurses and 4 CNAs."/>		
Job Class	<input type="text" value="Nursing"/>		
Job Search Class	<input type="text" value="Head Nurse"/>		
Employer	<input type="text" value="Circles of Care"/>		
Department	<input type="text" value="Psychiatric"/>		
Part Time	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Part Time Hours	<input type="text" value="0"/>		
Start Pay From	<input type="text" value="0"/>		
Start Pay To	<input type="text" value="0"/>		

FIG. 12a

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Total Leave Days	<input type="text" value="24"/>
Relocation Offered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sign Bonus Amount	<input type="text" value="3000"/>
Tuition Reimbursement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Experience Required	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
Education Required	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
Shift Type	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
Flex Type	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
Email Address	<input type="text"/>
Contact	<input type="text" value="Mary Ellen Smith"/>
Date Opened	<input type="text" value="12/01/1999"/>
Date Closed	<input type="text"/>
Reason Closed	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>

Field below are Read Only (Maintained by system)

Date Entered	<input type="text" value="12/01/1999"/>
Entered By	<input type="text" value="nm-emj"/>
Last Updated	<input type="text" value="12/01/1999"/>
Last Updated By	<input type="text" value="nm-emj"/>
EMJ Job ID	<input type="text" value="5582"/>

Add New Job	Save	Delete	Reset	
New Filter	Clear Filter	List View	Details View	Both Views

FIG.12b

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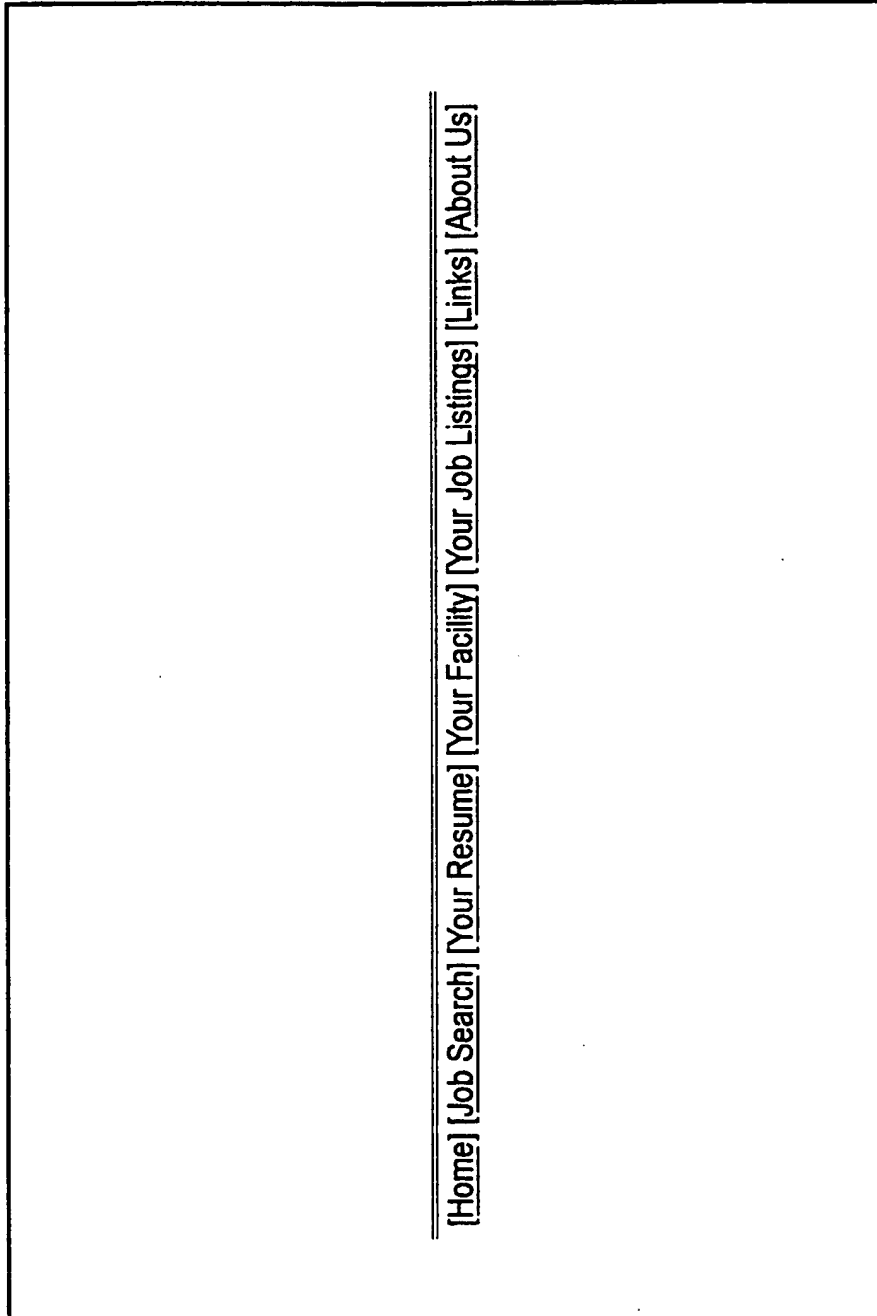


FIG.12c

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Edit Employer Details

Welcome Norman, here are the facilities you have edit rights for.

Departments
Job Openings
eMedJobs Home

Name	Street	Street 2	City	State	Zip	ID	Phone	F
Medical Center	12 Medical Dr		Jacksonville	FL	32207	853	XXX-202-2000	9
ABC Hospital	13 Hospital Dr		Fort Lauderdale	FL	33301	851	XXX-463-4321	9
General Medical Center	14 Medical Ave		Fort Lauderdale	FL	33316	866	XXX-355-4400	9
Facility Care	15 Care Rd		Melbourne	FL	32901	876	XXX-722-5200	4

Employer Name

Street

Street 2

City

State

Zipcode

Account Status

Facility Type

Main Phone

Main Fax

Medical Center

12 Medical Dr

Jacksonville

Florida

32207

N/A

Hospital

XXX-202-2000

XXX-202-2285

FIG.13a

Home Page	
General Delivery Email	
Total Number of Beds	591
Total Number of Employees	3000
Employer Description	
Teaching Facility	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Facility	<input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Facility	<input type="checkbox"/>
Military Facility	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trauma Level	Level 1
Emp Health Ins Contrib %	
Total Leave Bank	
Relocation Pkgs Offered	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sign On Bonuses Offered	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuition Reimb Offered	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fitness Center	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dental Program	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vision Program	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Care Center	<input type="checkbox"/>

FIG.13b

Elder Care Center

☐

Flex Options

4x10 ▾

Pension Options

401k ▾

Last Updated

09/14/1999 8:52:21 AM

Last Updated By

nm-emj ▾

Employer ID

853

Add New Facility

Save

Delete

Reset

Customer Service

Departments

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FIG.13c

Medical Center				Department Information Items			
<u>Edit Department Details</u>				<u>Job Openings</u> <u>eMedJobs Home</u>			
Record 1 of 14				Add New Dept	Save	Delete	Reset
<<	<	>	>>				
I <	<<	>	>>				
Department	Size	Beds	Staff	Email	Homepage	Department Description	Teaching
<u>Cardiac Care Unit</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Emergency Department</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Intensive Care Unit</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Labor & Delivery</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>MedSurg Nursing/General</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Neonatal Intensive Care Unit</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Operating Room</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Pediatric Intensive Care Unit</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Pediatrics</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Post Anesthesia Care Unit</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Psychiatric</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Radiology</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Respiratory Therapy</u>	0	0	0				false
<u>Telemetry Unit</u>	0	0	0				false

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Department	Cardiac Care Unit ▾
Department Size	Small ▾
Number of Beds	0
Primary Contact	Cathy Jones ▾
Email	

FIG. 13d

Homepage

Department Description

Teaching Deaprtment

☐

Add New Dept

Save

Delete

Reset

List View

Details View

Both Views

Department Information Items

[\[Home\]](#)

[\[Job Search\]](#)

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[\[Your Facility\]](#)

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[\[Links\]](#)

[\[About Us\]](#)

FIG.13e

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Inter. nal application No.

PCT/US00/33599

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : G 06 F 17/60

US CL : 705/1

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 705/1

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

Web site search: "JobOptions.com", "Hotjobs.com", "Hire.com", "Jobs.com"

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,884,270 A (WALKER et al.) 16 March 1999, column 2, lines 51-58; column 3, lines 5-15; column 4, lines 14-66; column 6, lines 10-67; column 7, lines 1-67; column 8, lines 19-25; column 19, lines 34-51	1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 21, 22, 27, 29, 30, 36, 37, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67
---		1-67
Y		
Y	US 5,978,768 A (McGOVERN et al.) 02 November 1999, column 1, lines 18-34; column 9, lines 41-55; column 13, lines 26-31;	1-67
Y	US 5,832,497 A (TAYLOR) 03 November 1998, entire document	1-67
Y	"JobOptions and HEALTHwindows Form New Partnership" Press release 28 June 1999, [online], [retrieved on 2001-3-17] <ULR: http://www.healthwindows.com/HealthWindows/joboptions-hw.htm > pages 1-2,	38-41



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T"

later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

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document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y"

document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&"

document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

19 March 2001 (19.03.2001)

Date of mailing of the international search report

11 APR 2001

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Authorized officer

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Telephone No. 703-308-0956

Paraguthana